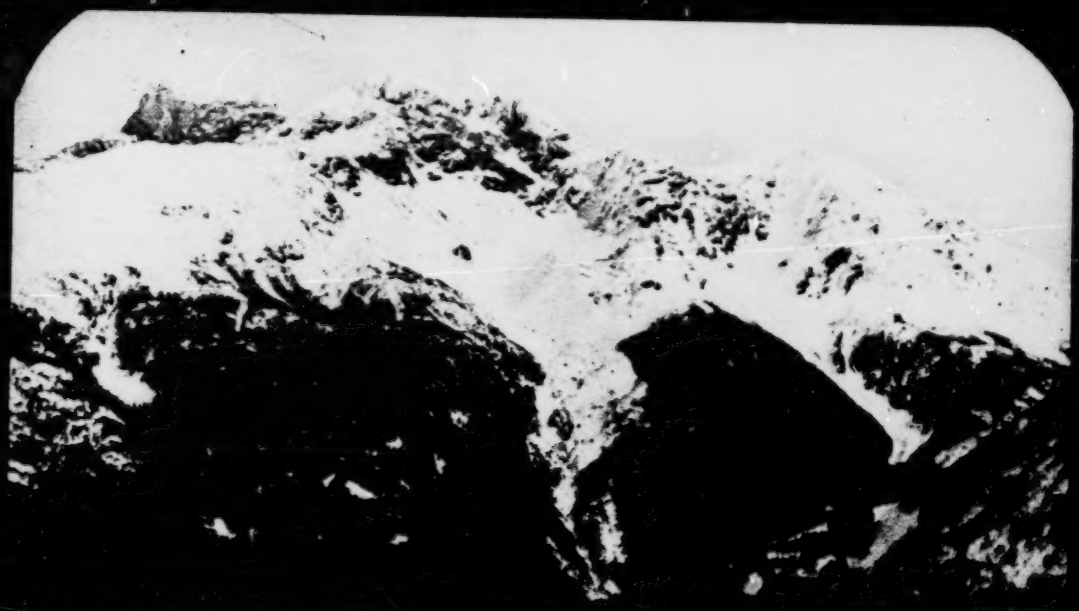
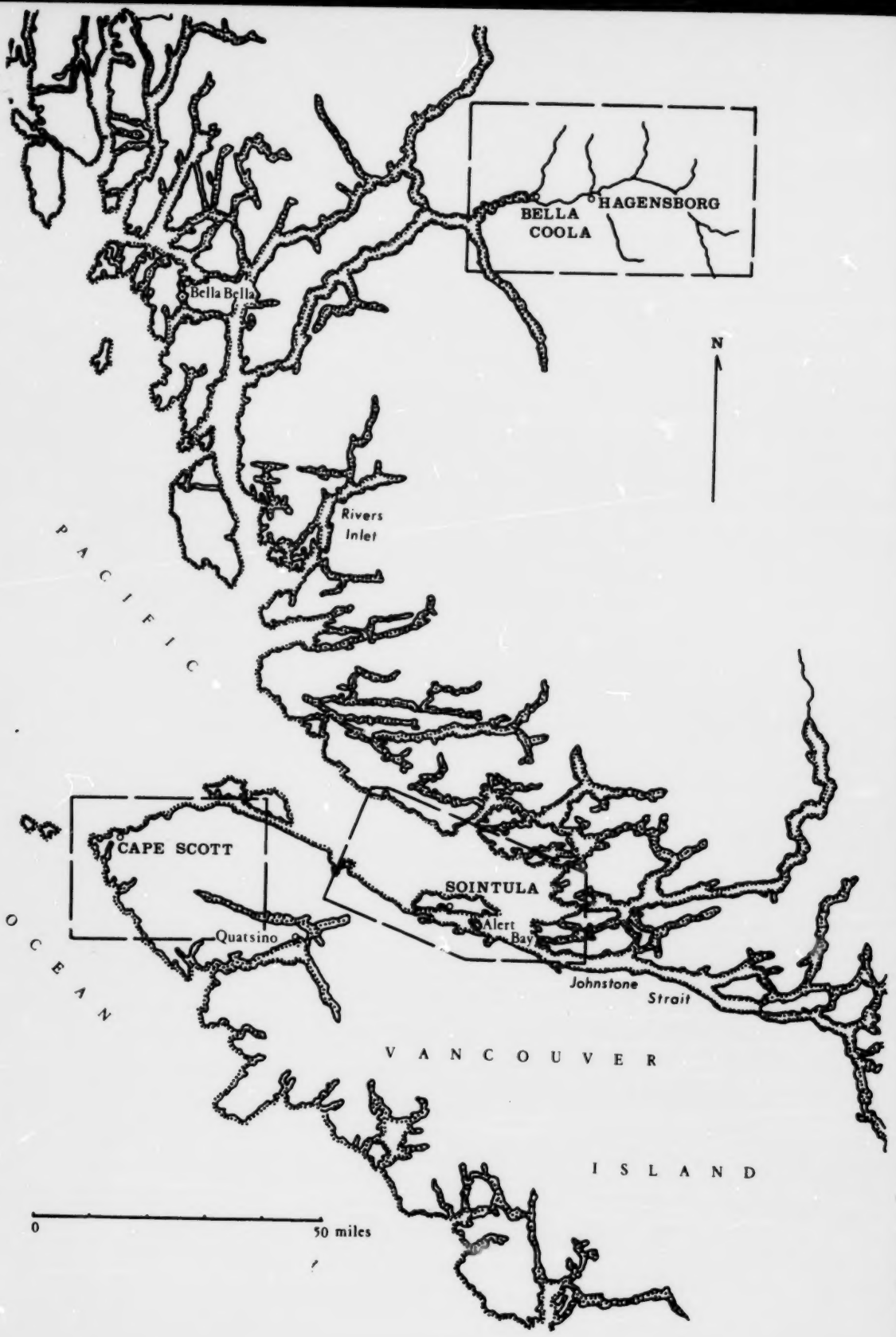
DREAMS OF FREEDOM

Bella Coola
Cape Scott
Sointula



SOUND HERITAGE SERIES Number 56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Quatsino
OCEAN
Johnstone Strait
VANCOUVER
ISLAND
0
50 miles

DREAMS OF FREEDOM

Bella Coola
Cape Scott
Sointula

Gordon Fish

SOUND HERITAGE SERIES Number 36

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Cover: Poling up the Bella Coola River. (Iver Fougner photo; PABC 95378).

Overleaf: Hans Fredericksen above the Devil's Cauldron.

Inside back cover: Haying at Cape Scott sometime after 1937.

Back cover: left to right: August Oberg and Teodor Tanner at Sointula, circa 1904. Sawmill in background.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

On 8 April, 1892, Iver Fougner began his diary in St. Cloud, Minnesota. That evening he spelt his name "Ivar," and that is how his *Diary* has been catalogued. However, three years later at Bella Coola he began spelling his name "Iver." A small point, perhaps, but it explains the two forms used in the following text. It also illustrates the Anglicization of European names as immigrants adapted to Canada.

In a number of cases throughout the text, when the spelling of Christian or surnames was in question, the form appearing in directories and/or the *British Columbia Voters' Lists* was used.

The map of the Bella Coola Valley places Bella Coola in its original location on the north side of the river; the location of the trail is based on a map of the period.

—the Editor

Above: First settlers at Quatsino, Vancouver Island, 1891. Left to right: Evenson, Lokken, Nordstroms (3), Berg—. (B. W. Leeson photo).

Opposite: San Josef Anglican Church, San Josef Bay. Emil Peterson working on steeple. (Eva Buol photo).

THIS DREAM, THIS FREEDOM

When William Duncan established Metlakatla near the mouth of the Skeena in 1862, he did so to create a sanctuary for his Tsimshian parishioners. Metlakatla was, Duncan believed, distant enough from Fort Simpson and the various nearby Indian villages to ensure there would be little outside influence. At Metlakatla they would worship and live in the way they chose, free individuals.

Although no one could have known it at the time, Duncan's action would be repeated by others numerous times in the forthcoming years. Many of these colonies would be created for exactly the same reasons, but in far more isolated areas. His experiment at Metlakatla is well-documented; a certain amount has been written regarding the Doukhobors in the Kootenays, and many of the other religious colonies that sprang up in British Columbia have been documented to a limited extent.

Ethnic colonies are less well-documented, particularly those planned before settlement began. Three colonies, which later developed into communities, are of great importance if we are to understand certain economic and sociological aspects of British Columbia's west coast. The Bella Coola Valley was settled by Norwegian immigrants from the United States in 1894. Danish settlers, many also from the United States, began to develop land at Cape Scott in 1896. In 1901, Finnish settlers

began to build Sointula on Malcolm Island. These people were neither the first nor the last Scandinavian settlers in this province, nor did they represent a majority of the Scandinavians in British Columbia. Quite simply, they were men and women with a dream.

This dream, this freedom to practice or not to practice religion in their own way, to have land of their own, and to live the way they wanted to live, is the first uniting factor between these three colonies. But a number of other factors distinguish these groups from the other settlers and settlements on the coast at that time. The colonists came from the same geographical region of northern Europe. They arrived on the coast within a few years of one another. They settled in the same general area of the coast, and they encountered similar problems of physical isolation and economic hardship. These Scandinavians established their own colonies in the wilderness, and shared a belief in certain ideals such as cooperation and self-reliance. Although a strong sense of "community" is a common feature of small town or village life, the social and economic organization to the colonies and aims and dreams of the colonists combined to make these settlements different from most coastal communities.

Many of the men and women interviewed for this issue were born near the opening of this century. They grew up in family units and life-styles difficult to imagine today. The isolation they experienced was a controlling factor in their lives. Bella Coola was cut off from the world for long periods of time; the Cape Scott settlers were not only cut off from the outside but from each other due to the lack of decent roads, trails and bridges; and Sointula, although not so completely isolated physically, faced a different isolation because of language and traditions.

Consequently their picture of that period of their lives is well-remembered and, as we discovered, extremely accurate. This picture is also unique. A great deal has been written about pioneer settlements, but little has appeared regarding pioneer European settlements in British Columbia. Even less has been published on, what we may call, the atmospherics of pioneer life. The faith and belief these settlers had for their new country, their willingness to settle in isolated locations, and to work as hard as they did for their dream should be more than the footnote it has long been in provincial history.

The Norwegian colony in the Bella Coola Valley lost its leader in its third year of existence, but it continued to grow and prosper. The Danish settlement at Cape Scott was confronted with almost insurmountable political difficulties and natural obstacles; nearly all of the original settlers had moved from the Cape by the First World War. Today it is a wild and isolated provincial park, and few signs of the original settlement remain. The Finnish colony at Sointula never overcame severe financial problems and it lasted only a few years; but a number of colonists stayed on and that community developed into an important commercial fishing centre.

Today there are very few of the original colonists left. Some were interviewed several years ago, and several kept diaries or wrote down their recollections of the early years. The history of Bella Coola is well-documented in this way, but much of the original Cape Scott material has been lost or scattered beyond recall. Since the Sointula colonists published a newspaper, wrote books, plays, poetry and songs, the history of the community is relatively well-known. It has also often been the subject of academic as well as popular articles.

This issue of the SOUND HERITAGE SERIES does not provide a detailed history of the three Scandinavian communities. There is not space enough for all the stories, and regrettably many have been lost in the passage of time. But it is hoped that these pages will help to keep alive the spirit of those early Scandinavians on the coast.

THE IMMIGRANT WAVE

During the last half of the 19th century, nearly fifteen million immigrants from Europe flooded into North America. Most of them were trying to escape from the poverty and oppression of their lives in Europe. Some were fleeing political turmoil and persecution. For all, North America offered the possibility of a better life, and the hope of spiritual and political freedom.

In the early years of the 19th century, the impact of the Industrial Revolution began to spread throughout Europe. New machines, engines, forms of transportation, and methods of production combined to increase productivity in many sectors of national economies and served to expand international trade. As industialization displaced craftsmen and artisans, it disrupted the traditional patterns of rural life, and did little to improve the standard of living of most workers in the new factories.

At the same time, new political and social ideas were discussed and debated. New political theories were developed, but attempts to put them into practice were not successful. 1848 was the year of revolutions in Europe, with uprisings in France, Italy, Austria, and Hungary. But the revolutions were short-lived, and conservative regimes established their power more forcefully than ever in the following years. However, the revolutionary theories did help to create a sense of national identity in Norway and Finland, two countries that had been ruled by outsiders for most of their history. In 1864 a long-simmering border dispute between Denmark and Prussia erupted into war. Still, conservative governments prevailed; the established church was a powerful force in society, and the economic condition of much of the rural population did not improve in the latter part of the century.

In Norway there was a chronic shortage of land. Since land was usually passed on to the eldest son, the other children had little opportunity or incentive to stay in agriculture. In the country fishing and logging provided some work. In the towns and cities there were few jobs to be found, and accommodation was scarce. During this period, Ibsen was writing plays that satirized the activities of politicians and attacked the depressingly austere and narrow-minded attitudes that prevailed in society. Although trade unions were formed and workers' political organizations were set up, a large segment of the population did not have the right to vote.

The Danish economy—and Danish pride—was shocked by the loss of a large part of the country when Prussian and Austrian forces occupied the duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg in 1864. Nevertheless, there were few social or economic changes as a result. For nearly a decade after 1876, the constitution was largely disregarded; the premier ruled by decree, backed by the king and a conservative majority in the upper house of the Danish parliament. However, there were two interesting developments in the countryside. Folk high schools were established, and new teaching methods were put into practice.

Based on practical examples rather than formal tuition, these methods helped break down traditional rural conservative attitudes. And in the 1880s, the first dairy producers' cooperatives were formed. These gave small farmers more independence from large landowners; since the quality of butter produced by the co-ops was carefully controlled, they contributed to an increase in export sales. Although hundreds of co-ops were formed before the end of the century, they could not

overcome all the problems of rural life and considerable numbers of people were forced to move to the cities in search of work.

After centuries of Swedish rule, Finland had become an autonomous grand duchy of Russia in 1809. An immediate result of this change was the growth and development of Finnish national consciousness. Use of the Finnish language was encouraged for the first time; the very restricted system of education was altered and expanded throughout much of the country. By the middle of the century, the first stages of industrial development were under way. Rural Finland was marked by extreme poverty and widespread malnutrition. Small tenant farmers were subject to high rents and taxes; they had to do work for landowners as well, and with no written agreements about such matters, there were no rewards for any improvements they might make to their property. The life of thousands of farm labourers was no better, and in many cases it was even worse. In Finland, the 1860s were years of famine.

To make matters worse for European farmers and peasants, grain exports from the United States and Russia lowered prices for farm produce and farmland in the years following the Crimean War and the American Civil War. But the spreading network of railways and steamship services that brought the grain to Europe also made long-distance travel possible. This provided an alternative for the poor, the unemployed, and the adventurous: emigration to the New World.

In the 1870s, the United States offered an abundance of free land, relatively high wages even for unskilled labour, and a high degree of religious and political freedom. Although life was not easy for newcomers—to match the glowing promises and extravagant claims of the advertisements of steamship and railroad companies and land agents would have been impossible—the generally positive experiences of the early migrants encouraged others.

Many Scandinavians went to work in the cities, in factories and industrial plants, others worked in the mines or the woods. Large numbers settled on the plains of the midwest from Wisconsin and Minnesota to the Dakotas, where they established communities. The peak of the Finnish migration came in the last decade of the century, by which time almost all the arable land had been occupied, so they congregated in more isolated settlements or kept to themselves in towns and cities. But they could not escape the economic and social forces around them.

The American industrial boom after the Civil War, followed by a depression that lasted from 1873 to 1878, set a pattern of alternating periods of prosperity and depression for the rest of the century. Unfortunately, the periods of depression were longer than the periods of prosperity. The farmers and homesteaders had to deal with these economic uncertainties and the familiar problems of poverty and possible unemployment. Some of the immigrants became active in cooperatives, farmers' organizations or unions; for others it was time to look for somewhere else to go—somewhere away from the monotony of single-crop farming, the stifling heat and the freezing cold of the midwest.

As the Canadian Pacific Railway pushed across the prairies and into the mountains, the Canadian and British Columbian governments encouraged immigration. For Norwegians in particular, the climate and countryside of British Columbia was attractive for it reminded them of home, and there was room for the familiar mixture of farming, fishing, and work in the forests. The Danes realized that the west coast climate would probably be favourable for dairy farming, and the Finns found work on the railway and in the newly-opened mines.

For hardy and resourceful pioneers imbued with the spirit of cooperation, a touch of self-reliance, and a dash of political idealism perhaps, British Columbia seemed to offer attractive possibilities for a fresh start and a better life.

THREE COLONIES

BELLA COOLA

1893 marked the beginning of a severe depression in the United States and many farmers in the midwestern states lost their properties when they were unable to make payments on debts and mortgages. In Minnesota and the Dakotas, where many Scandinavians had settled in the latter part of the 19th century, a group of Norwegians became interested in making a fresh start elsewhere. Some had lost their farms, others were tired of the frigid prairie winters and the blazing hot summers. Leading one search for a better area was Reverend Christian Saugstad, pastor of the Lutheran Free Church in Polk County, Minnesota.

Inspired by the principles of his faith, Reverend Saugstad was actively looking into the possibility of establishing a colony where his congregation would be able to live a happy and virtuous life away from the evils of the world. It seems likely that he saw, or heard about, an article on Bella Coola written by Bernhart Fillip Jacobsen, a Norwegian, who had been to the valley early in 1884. Jacobsen described the area in favourable terms, and even suggested that it would be a suitable place for a colony. Encouraged by this report printed in the

Above: Andrew Svisdahl and Mathis Hammer, "The two best broadaxe men in the colony." (Iver Fougner photo: PABC 95374).

Norwegian language newspaper, *Washington-Posten*, in Seattle, Reverend Staugstad included the Bella Coola Valley in a tour of possible sites for the colony in the Pacific Northwest.

MILO FOUGNER: Most of the people that went to Bella Coola were from Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, [Iowa and Wisconsin] and some of predominantly Scandinavian areas in the Red River Valley. And 1894 was the middle of one of the worst depressions, I guess, that the United States had ever experienced. It was getting harder and harder to sell their wheat. They had several poor crops, they had hail and this, that and the other thing, and they didn't have the wheat that we have nowadays. There was rust, and they were plagued by a number of things, and their economic position was pretty bad.

Reverend Saugstad, who was, amongst other things, I think, an idealist, probably had been thinking for some time about establishing a colony of almost morally perfect people, in an ideal situation away from temptation.

He was to be the leader. So he and two others, Mr. [A.] Stortroen was one, came out to the West, and they examined several possibilities. One, the American government offered them the Yakima Valley, and said that they would put in irrigation if Saugstad's group would settle. Then they came to Victoria and they [the B.C. government] offered them land in the Fraser Valley. And then he and B. F. Jacobsen went up to Bella Coola.

Jacobsen at that time was collecting curios for a museum in Germany and could speak the Bella Coola language; in fact, he could speak two or three Indian dialects fluently, and had been on the coast some time. They looked the situation over and more and more Reverend Saugstad realized that here was the Shangri-la that he was looking for. He could herd his people in there and they could be supervised and he could make the valley into a garden.

TED LEVELTON: Now my personal opinion is, they either wore dark glasses or couldn't see at all, because frankly, I would never have come here when I think of what the country was like when we arrived here. What he could see in the place I'll never know. But anyway, he came back and painted a very glowing picture of the conditions here. There was lots of fish, there was lots of game, there was wild fruit and there was good land and lots of timber. Well, I quite agree with him there—there was lots of these things that he mentioned, mind you—but for a man to move in here with just his bare hands, into a wild country, no transportation whatever except a boat every two months in those days, and that was uncertain . . . . If the weather was bad they didn't come in here.

May 25, 1894:

The prospects for a bountiful harvest are good, why are we not satisfied? Without dissatisfaction no progress.

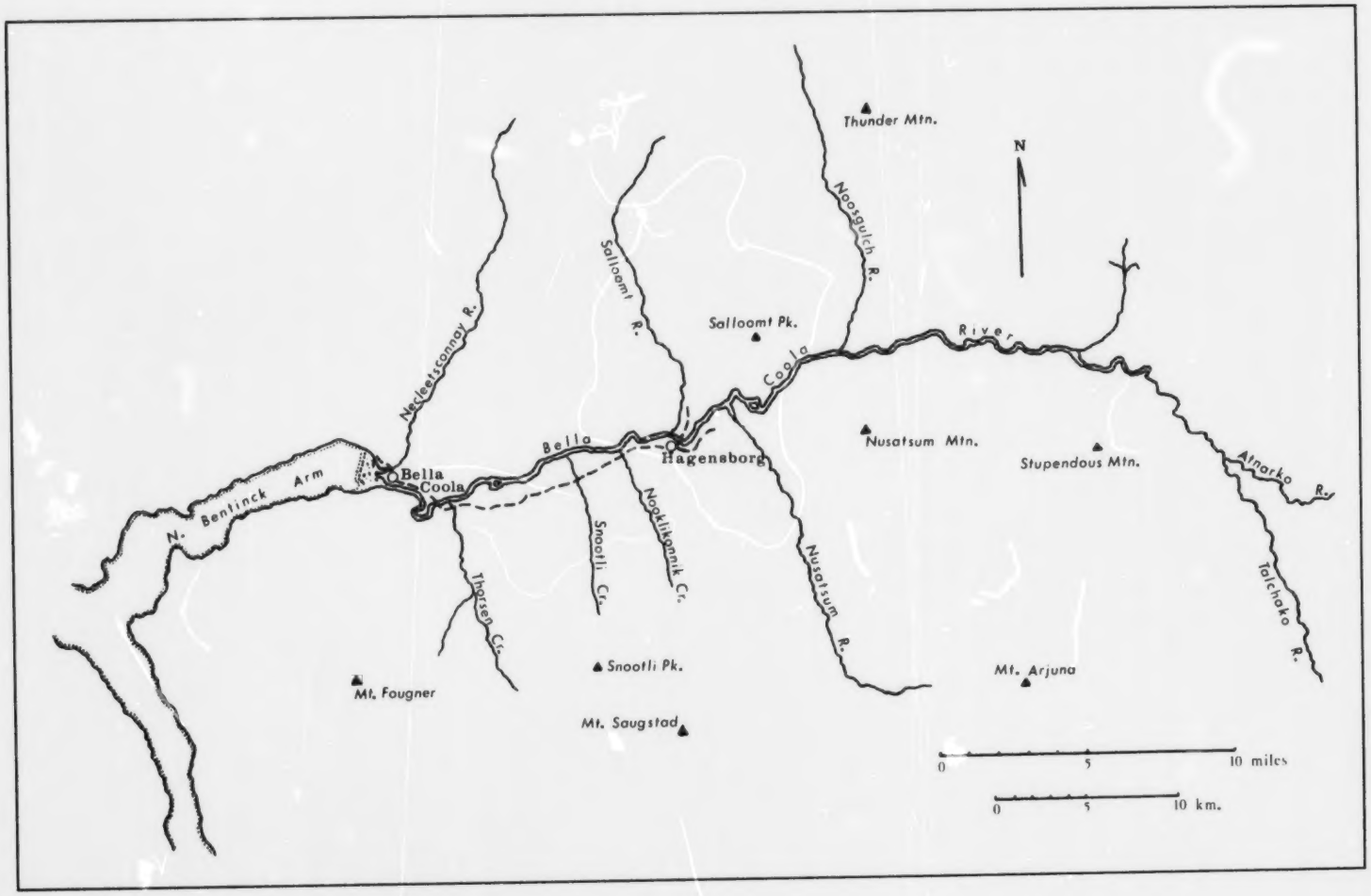
June 10, 1894:

Ground is dry; rain is needed; the wind is blowing from the south.

June 17, 1894:

Yesterday I received a letter from Chr. Rustad, Hoodsport, Wash. He speaks of trout fishing and of life in the primeval forests of the West Coast. I must go there to see if I can't make more of life than I can on the inland pra[i]ries.

Seven weeks of school left yet. Oh, for a life in the woods, free from trouble and care, not troubling any one and not being troubled by any one.


Thunder Mtn.
N
Nooseguleh R.
Salloomt R.
Salloomt Pk.
Necleetsconnay R.
Coola River
Bella Coola
Bella
Hagensborg
N. Bentinck Arm
Nusatsum Mtn.
Stupendous Mtn.
Atnarko R.
Nooklebannik Cr.
Snootli Cr.
Thorsen Cr.
Nusatsum R.
Talchako R.
Snootli Pk.
Mt. Fougner
Mt. Saugstad
Mt. Arjuna
0 5 10 miles
0 5 10 km.

July 15, 1894:

My mind is now on Canada bent. Strange indeed it will be if I next year by this time shall not find myself in British Columbia.

On Bella Coola River is very likely my future home. There will latent powers possessed by me come forth, and the air castles of youth become a reality.

—IVAR FOUGNER, DIARY

TED LEVELTON: He [Rev. Saugstad] came back here and then got busy and that summer they signed up about 85 people. Among them was my dad, Erasmus Levelton. He was a man who had been raised in the timbered country. He'd done quite a number of years fishing the Lofoten Islands, out where the fishing is really tough. You fish in the winter there; you go out there with the cold gales howling and ice and things. Anyway, he got fed up with that kind of life and decided to migrate. We migrated to the United States in the summer of 1892 and went to Minnesota, where a number of relatives had moved in previous years.

ANNIE LEVELTON: Dad didn't like Minnesota, he wasn't used to the flat prairie country and he wanted to go where there was the sea; he was used to that.

July 23, 1894:

Talk about heat and drouth (sic) We are now experiencing both. Yesterday at 1/2 p. 4 the thermometer registered 92° in the shade and over 120° in the sun; it was scorching. As for the rain we have not had any for several weeks. The wheat fields are turning yellow. Early harvest is suspected this year. Ten days of school left. Then for the harvest fields. Uppermost in my mind is yet B.C.

August 5, 1894:

The future is bright; the present is occupied by building air-castles about British Columbia. Of course they will never become real, but anyhow they serve to brighten the present, and that is worth a good deal.

What now! Shall I go to work at manual labor? Should like to see old man Saugstad first. Suppose I shall have to go to Crookston to that end.

—IVAR FOUGNER

While Reverend Saugstad was signing up potential colonists, he was also engaged in a lengthy correspondence with the British Columbia government to determine the conditions on which land would be made available to the colonists. These were eventually established as follows:

—Each settler would get 160 acres of land, rent free, and would be given title to the land when it had been improved to the value of $5 per acre.

—Each family had to have $300 in cash.

—As soon as 30 members had built houses on their land, a wagon road would be constructed through the colony.

Sept. 26 <u>Fred Worden's place, Town of Bygland Minn.</u>

Our departure is fixed to the 17th of Oct. so I shall not be able to finish my school. But a substitute may be found to do it.

HO, Bella Coola, How are you?
Is there room for me on your banks.

—IVAR FOUGNER

TED LEVELTON: They left Minnesota and went up to Winnipeg where they got on the CPR and the CPR took them into Vancouver. They had to go from Vancouver to Victoria because that was where the provincial government was, your land department and all that.

There was one man [Ole Olson] who went off the wagon and was arrested for disorderly behaviour, right in Victoria, and they refused to let him come up here. Reverend Saugstad said, "No, that man can't come with this colony," and the government packed him up and said 'okay, and sent him right back to Minnesota.

As a group, the colonists were viewed favourably by the Victoria press and the British Columbia government:

We trust that the expectations and hopes of the Norwegians who are on their way to settle in Bella Coola will be more than realized. Scandinavians make good settlers. They are intelligent, sober, pious, industrious and self-reliant. They do not expect too much. They come from a country where nature is not very generous—where men have to work hard and continuously to gain a comfortable livelihood, and they therefore will not be discouraged when they are required to face the difficulties and endure the hardships and privations incident to pioneer life.

—VICTORIA *Daily Colonist*, OCTOBER 25, 1894

In a magazine article one of the colonists described a meeting with the Minister of Immigration:

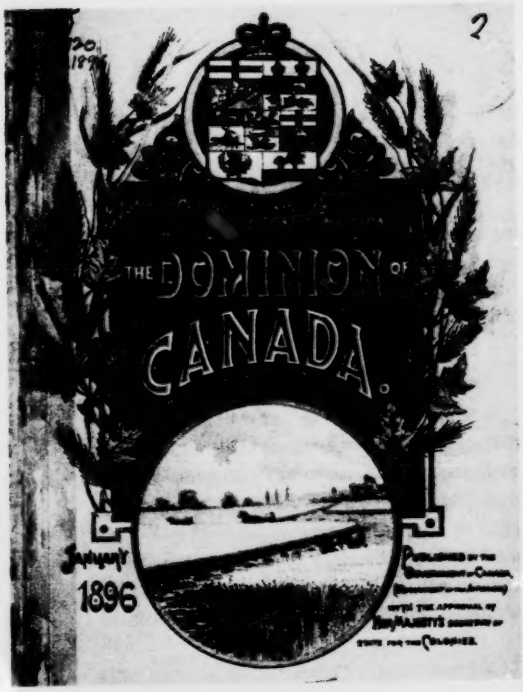
On October 26, the day prior to departure, we colonists were summoned to meet in the legislature building, where the Minister of Immigration addressed us, welcomed us to the province and repeated the government's offer of land free of cost and construction of a wagon road through the valley, the building of a school house with free school for the children. Also all government land in the area was to be reserved for five years and made available for people of Norwegian descent who might later wish to take up land and build a home in Bella Coola. The offer was considered to be very good.

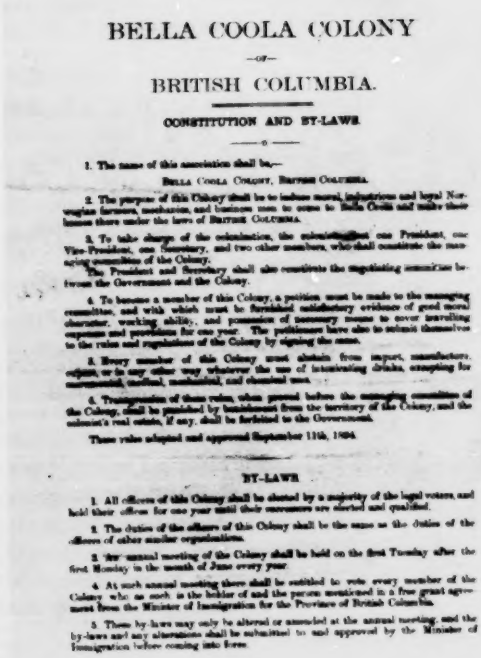
—TORLIEV VIKEN, "AN ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST SETTLEMENT IN BELLA COOLA VALLEY"

MILO FOUGNER: They boarded the old side-wheeler *Princess Louise* and headed for Bella Coola. On the way there they drew lots for land and it had been decided that first of all they would draw lots for land, a quarter section of land each. Then the four chaps who had drawn the same section, quarters in the same section, banded together and the idea was that they would build a temporary shelter on the section and the four of them would work together improving their individual properties. This worked out very nicely.

Colony meeting held onboard *Princess Louise* Oct. 29, '94 for the purpose of agreeing to some general plan to pursue in taking up land in Bella Coola. Moved by Peder Thoreson seconded by Engebret Fosbak: That the land be drawn by lots; these lots being 1 sq. mile to be subdived between four. 18 parties: 72 claim-takers. 4 from Seattle.

—IVAR FOUGNER





BELLA COOLA COLONY

—OF—

BRITISH COLUMBIA.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS.

1. The name of this association shall be—

BELLA COOLA COLONY, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

2. The purpose of this Colony shall be to induce moral, industrious and loyal Norwegian farmers, mechanics, and business men to come to Bella Coola and make their homes there under the laws of BRITISH COLUMBIA.

3. To take charge of the colonization, the colonists shall elect one President, one Vice-President, one Secretary, and two other members, who shall constitute the managing committee of the Colony.

The President and Secretary shall also constitute the negotiating committee between the Government and the Colony.

4. To become a member of this Colony, a petition must be made to the managing committee, and with which must be furnished satisfactory evidence of good moral character, working ability, and possession of necessary means to cover travelling expenses and provisions for one year. The petitioners have also to submit themselves to the rules and regulations of the Colony by signing the same.

5. Every member of this Colony must abstain from import, manufactory, export, or in any other way whatever the use of intoxicating drinks, excepting for sacramental, medical, manufactural, and chemical uses.

6. Transgression of these rules, when proved before the managing committee of the Colony, shall be punished by banishment from the territory of the Colony, and the colonist's real estate, if any, shall be forfeited to the Government.

These rules adopted and approved September 11th, 1894.

BY-LAWS.

1. All officers of this Colony shall be elected by a majority of the legal voters, and hold their offices for one year until their successors are elected and qualified.

2. The duties of the officers of this Colony shall be the same as the duties of the officers of other similar organizations.

3. The annual meeting of the Colony shall be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in the month of June every year.

4. At such annual meeting there shall be entitled to vote every member of the Colony who as such is the holder of and the person mentioned in a free grant agreement from the Minister of Immigration for the Province of British Columbia.

5. These by-laws may only be altered or amended at the annual meeting, and the by-laws and any alterations shall be submitted to and approved by the Minister of Immigration before coming into force.

Torliev Viken described the group's arrival:

On the 28th of October, which was a Sunday, pastor Saugstad conducted services during the afternoon. Towards evening the weather began making up, with the brewing of a storm. Waves rose and the ship rolled heavily. Indications pointed to a night of storm. A number of passengers began to feel less well, and others undertook to turn in. But since there were not enough cabins for everyone it became necessary for a number to lie on sofas and on tables in the dining salon. Some lay on the tables—others on the decks under the tables. Very few undertook to sit up in the heavy sea way. The boat listed and the men on the tables who could not keep their balance rolled off to the deck and tramped all over those who lay beneath to the great amusement of the audience who roared their laughter salvos with each new disaster and disturbance.

On October 30, at 2 p.m. the *Princess Louise* dropped anchor in the river at Bella Coola, and the colonists prepared to land. The company now included 84 persons, with women and children.

From the deck of the *Princess Louise* one could now see the sort of territory to which he was going. The valley seemed somewhat narrow with high mountains on either side. Along the sea front there appeared to be some land but further up in the valley a mountain peak blanked out most of the view of the valley. After a while a few small boats put out from land near the mouth of the river.

—T. VIKEN

MILO FOUGNER: There was no dock there, of course. The Indians came out to meet them in canoes at the mouth of the river and the colonists were all very surprised that standing right up in one of the Indian canoes was a very, very, blonde-haired girl. It turned out she was Bertha Thorson, a daughter of an old sea captain [Thore Thorson] who had retired in Bella Coola. He had come there just prior to the colony and he later joined the colony. It sort of perked them up a bit to see some of their kind there.

Towards evening we were ashore and were busy erecting our tents for the night. We landed on the west side of the [Bella Coola] river where Captain Thorson had his houses and we erected our tents temporarily.

During the evening the Indians arranged a masked war dance on the opposite side of the river near the Indian village, as entertainment for the colonists. We were invited to see their war dance.

After we had rested a few days from our journey we began to wander up into the valley to look at our land. On board ship we had drawn lots as to which acreage each should have and none was especially interested in running about since one must first ascertain what land one had drawn during the drawings. All land was covered with thick forests and therefore very difficult to clear. Some found their land to be fairly good while others were very disappointed and wished to return at once.

The others tried first to inspect their acreage then move up the valley with their tents and food supplies. On November 4, Carl Elg, Carl Christofferson, Peder K. Pederson, Kriken and I went about twelve miles up the valley to view the land. We followed a trail for approximately ten miles but it became very difficult to proceed since the forest was thick with large trees and impenetrable terrain. Old tree trunks occasionally had tumbled over each other and shut out all travel. Towards evening we arrived at a small rise in the ground where we erected tents and camped for the night. It was somewhat chilly since the previous day there had been a little snow and we were soaking wet. We gathered wood and decided to sit up through the night, light a camp fire and tell stories. Whereupon Carl Elg shot a partridge. We cooked this on the fire and ate it for supper. The night passed and, when we had breakfast and were to proceed, a large grizzly galloped out of the woods towards us. We had only shotguns and it was impossible to engage such a champion, but when he was only a few steps away he turned and again vanished into the woods.

We crossed through the forest to the river. Here Carl Elg and Carl Christofferson began to build a raft with poles with which to float down river since we were tired of tramping the long way home. They finished the raft and began the journey downstream. Peder Pederson, Kriken and I continued our return on foot. At eight o'clock on the morning of November 5 we reached our tent along the sea. But the two sailors, whom we had expected to arrive ahead of us, had not yet arrived. We were afraid they were lost accidentally in the river. The water was running rapidly and with a few timber or log jams it presented dangerous sailing. Two hours later they arrived. They reported they lost the raft but had been lucky enough to get out of the water, and through the forest they had found the trail towards the sea so they escaped spending the night in the forest following their cold bath.

—T. VIKEN

Although the colonists were scattered along the valley, the centre of the community was about 12 miles from the sea. Originally called Christiania, the community later became known as Hagensborg, the location of Hagen Christensen's store.

The first winter was a hard one. The colonists cut a road from Bella Coola, at the mouth of the Bella Coola River, to Hagensborg.

Nov. 18:

7-1/2 o'clock. Sunday

Thermometer 44°. Raining to beat the Dutch. Dark as pitch outside. Boys are playing whist.

Dec. 16

This week I am the cook, getting along all'right.
Today is Sunday; just home from church.
Feelings up and down.
Climate steady, over a foot of snow on the ground. Travelling in woods pretty nasty as the trees are loaded down with snow.

—I. FOUGNER

On May 6th, more colonists arrived. Some were families of the men in the first group and others were Norwegians from different areas of the American midwest.

TED LEVELTON: We came up here on a boat called the *Danube*. I can remember the old whistle just about scared us to death. We were standing around, you know, watching the shoreline gradually coming closer and then, all of a sudden, this whistle let out a terrific blast out and we kids just about jumped out of our shoes!

Ivar Fougner's cabin on his "Fairview" estate. Company coming for coffee.
(Iver Fougner photo; PABC 95373).

As soon as the steamer blew its whistle, these Indians all came boiling down in their great big old spoon canoes and surrounded the ship. They had heard about these people coming in and they figured, "Well, now here's a dollar or two for us, you see; we'll be able to take these people ashore."

They would take a whole canoe-load from the boat down there up to the village for a dollar. It'd take three men when the tide was out because there was a rather rapid current in that river and they'd have the boat loaded with trunks. There used to be a village on the bank; great big old houses. They would be 40 feet wide and probably a 100 feet long—terrific big houses.

When we landed here Dad already had a house built, and we walked right up six miles that same afternoon. I can remember going up. I was not quite six, and I can remember my legs were getting pretty tired by the time I got up there.

ANNIE LEVELTON: Father had a cabin—luckily. He was the only one who really had a good cabin so we had a home to go to, but it was alarming after having been on the prairies to see those huge trees, you know. And my mother, oh, she just couldn't get reconciled to the fact that she left a beautiful home in the old country, in Norway, with servants and all that sort of thing to look after all us little ones, and to arrive up here and . . . Oh, dear, she didn't know what to do.

EDEL HAMMER: My father was Erick Nordschow. He had been in the hardware business in Iowa. He had a farm at first, but then he got into business, and it got so bad and so much credit on the books that he heard of this bunch going out to the west coast and he decided that sounded pretty good. So he came out here and got road work to start with, and he wrote to my mother and said: "Sell out. Have a sale and sell out." And we came out.

We came out here on the *Danube*. Early in the morning our father came in a canoe with the Indians and they put down a rope ladder that we had to climb and my father was at the bottom to grab each one as we came along. And they took us up to the beach where we stayed at Captain Thorsons's. Next day we walked up on the trail all the way. There wasn't any road; there was woods everywhere which was lots of fun for kids. I was eight then, and we kids couldn't get over the moss on the trees.

ANNIE ENGEBRETSON: My father was Jacob Johnson Lumaas. He came to the States in 1869 and he worked in Wisconsin in the timber. So he was a logger, a hand-logger. Then he had a farm in Cookston, Minnesota, then his wife died and his children died and there was only one left—that was me. And I was not very strong so he thought he'd change climate, and he wanted to go back to logging. That's the reasons he came here. He came in 1894. I'd thought it would be all right if it could make me strong and healthy. I was 13.

We landed at [John] Clayton's store. There was about 40 of us, mostly women and children and two or three men.

May 1, 1895:

Worked in the church-ground today. There were about twenty at work. The trees are now green, the leaves comming (sic) forth lively. Fine warm days, mosquitoes plentiful.

May 7

On May 6 at 5 o'clock in the morning arrived the families to Bella Coola, between 50 or 60, I am told, mostly small children.

—I. FOUGNER

ANNIE ENGEBRETSON: I can picture them leaving Clayton's. They all had packs on. My father had my blanket, I had my suitcase, and the little children were riding on top of the packs on the men, and there was a long string of us went up. The trail was narrow, crooked. We crawled on trees across the creeks; especially we had to cross a big river, that they call Nusatsum, it [the bridge] was just poles and my father led me across. We all got as far as what we call Hagensborg now. My uncle, Ole Gaarden, lived this side of Snootli [Creek] and we stayed at his place.

BERTHA NYGAARD: I came in the spring of 1895 with my parents. My dad was headed for California, then Reverend Saugstad met him on the street in Minnesota and persuaded him to join the colonists. And that's what he did. He said "We want men like you, great big husky men."

My first memories of Bella Coola are of the Indians poling us up the river. I was frightened and they were chanting. They only had blankets around them. The old Hansen place was where we landed and poor mother—there were five of us—said she was standing out there, she didn't know where to go or what to do, and my dad was then pitching a tent under some trees for the night. And Mrs. Hansen said, "Come with me, this house can hold a few more" and when we got there it was just full of people!

TED LEVELTON: When you're a kid of six, it was a grand place to run around, climb trees and chase squirrels and all this kind of stuff.

You could raise good crops when you got the land cleared, but, boy, it was all back-breaking work. The ground was grubbed with a grubhoe. There were no horses or ploughs, and the patches were too small anyway for a horse even to turn around on. You'd grub out a little spot for a garden, and another little patch for potatoes, and that was it for the first few years. It was the women and the children that did most of this because the men had to get out and hustle. Most of them who came here, I would say, were down to practically their last dollar when they arrived here. I know certainly my dad was.

ANNIE ENGEBRETSON: They all had to work and they were all together in bunches then, you see. My father started to cut logs for his own house. He just split the cedar logs. I shingled the roof. We were busy all the time. I helped to pull on the crosscut saw, dig up the devil's club and things. I got strong!

ANNIE LEVELTON: We kids all helped clear land. We had to work from the time we were quite small. Of course father was a builder of no mean ability.

TED LEVELTON: Luckily he was a good woodsman, a good man with a broadaxe. He could build just about as nice a log house as you'd want to set eyes on. And he was also a fairly good carpenter so he got a certain amount of work building homes for others here. That's the way he made a few dollars.

BERTHA NYGAARD: My father was a tailor in Minnesota. In Bella Coola he was supposed to be a farmer but he didn't know anything about farming. He had hands like a woman, because he'd done nothing but light work; but he made a success of whatever he undertook. We ended up having one of the biggest ranches there.

MILO FOUGNER: I suppose transportation was their biggest problem. My dad says in one place in his diary: "I got up at five this morning and walked to the waterfront and back," which would be 24 miles round trip over a rough trail that they had hacked out. He doesn't mention the fact that on his way back he packed all of the things that he needed possibly for the next two or three weeks. They packed cookstoves on

Leisure moments for colonists a la Currier & Ives. (Iver Fougner photo: PABC 95349).

their backs; they packed everything that you need in your home, and that's the only way they could pack it—there were no horses—other than the river itself for canoes. Certainly you could get it up to the river bank, but in a lot of cases you still had to pack it a long ways.

It's the [Bella Coola] valley that runs east and west and the part that they settled would be from saltwater to 24–25 miles up the valley. And [the Bella Coola River is] quite a large river, lush growth, down on the valley floor itself, huge timber—fir, cedar, hemlock—interspersed with miles of devil's club and underbrush. Then along the river a thick growth of willow and alder and birch and that sort of thing. There just wasn't anything easy about it. It wasn't these sylvan paths that you hear about going through the forest of *Evangeline* by any means at all. It was tough going.

TED LEVELTON: I can remember we had some terrific winters. The first couple of winters we were here we had terrific snowfalls. The people up the valley had a hard time because they had to break a road for 12 miles in the snow.

I can remember a good many times those fellows would come down from Hagensborg, 12 miles up, and they'd come down here to Clayton's and get, oh, 60 pounds worth of provisions. They'd put that on their backs and they'd start back up again and they'd get it back up to our place at nine or ten o'clock at night, absolutely pooped out. They were just barely able to drag their feet behind them. They stayed at our place overnight.

ANNIE LEVELTON: My mother was one of the most generous women in the world. She always had the coffee pot on, and it made no difference if they were black, red or white, she fed them all.

TED LEVELTON: I can remember, oh, six or eight or ten of these fellows coming in a bunch. They had no blankets with them and it meant that we had to put some bedding on the floor and they'd flake out in a row on the floor.

We slept upstairs. This house was only about seven feet high on the wall but they'd put some joists in and then they'd laid some boards along the top, about eight feet wide. It was just a very small room up in there but that's where all us kids slept. Whenever any youngsters came in we'd flake out like sardines in a can, you see, along these boards. I can remember looking down over the edge—they had a board set up on edge at the side of this floor so you wouldn't fall off it—looking down and seeing this row of fellows' faces in the early morning light. You'd see them all lying there with their noses in the air, some snoring away to high heavens and other fellows with a great big bunch of whiskers on. We used to get a big bang out of watching the different facial expressions you'd see down below—some fellow, you know, snoring away in good style!

Although some of the original colonists had left the valley soon after their arrival, newcomers continued to arrive, and by the end of 1896, the colony had, according to Iver Fougner's census, 158 members. The men earned some money working on the construction of a wagon road from the waterfront up the valley. Land for farming was gradually cleared and cabins built. A church congregation assembled, and a choir was formed. A post office, a store and a library were established. Gardens provided a variety of vegetables, the streams were a source of salmon, and there were deer and geese.

In 1896, the colonists did very well fishing at Rivers Inlet. In Torliev Viken's words, "the men returned with money in their pockets and courage in their hearts to return to clearing land."

MILO FOUGNER: The Reverend Saugstad was the first to die of the colonists. He had great plans; he had organized so many things, a salmon cannery, sawmills, and he also planned a river steamer to bring supplies up and down the river.

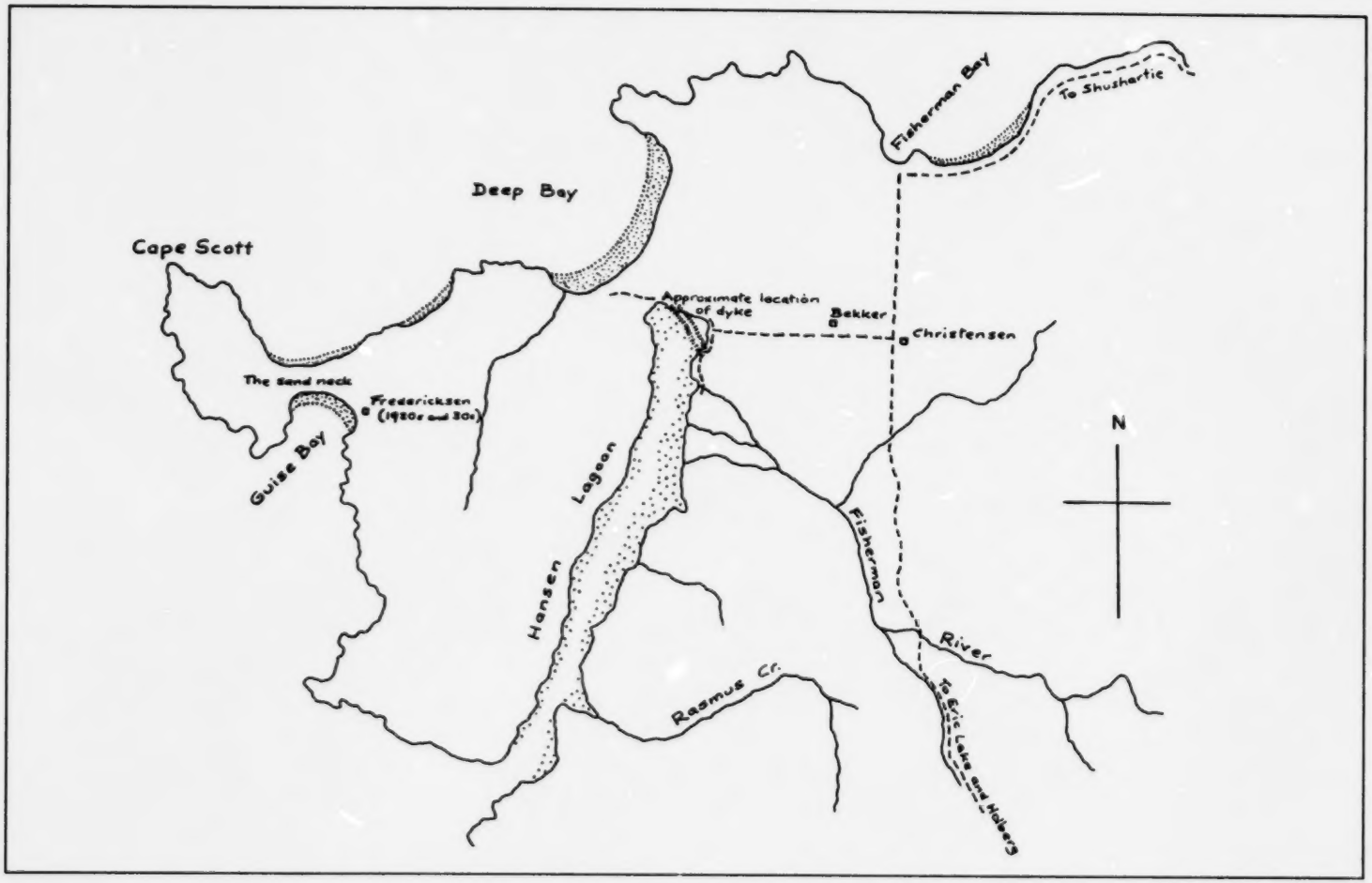
He foresaw the farming, of course, and dairying as being the big thing, putting in the creameries and exporting the products of the creameries and also farm products of various kinds. Regular meetings were held and then annual colony meetings and they had committees of all types for administering the colony. It would have been interesting, and I suppose that has been said many times, as to just what would have happened if they had continued under his strong leadership.

April 7:

Rev. Saugstad is dead. March 18. He died just as he reached home after a trip to Victoria and Seattle to buy a small saw-mill some cows and horses. As it will be hard to get another minister up in that part of the world his death was a sad blow to the colony; his services as president will also be a thing the colony will have to do without; there are no lack of eligibles for that office however.

—I. FOUGNER

Opposite: left to right: Nels Nelson, Lars Jensen, Carl Rasmussen, Soren Simonsen, Theo Frederiksen; Cape Scott, circa 1900. (C. B. Christensen photo).


Fisherman Bay
To Shushartie
Deep Bay
Cape Scott
Approximate location of dyke
Bekker
Christensen
The sand neck
Fredericksen (1920s and 30s)
Guise Bay
Hansen Lagoon
Fisherman River
N
Rasmus Cr.
To Erie Lake and Habers

CAPE SCOTT

The settlers at Cape Scott came with the same high hopes and determination that characterized the colonists at Bella Coola. However, in place of the methodical survey carried out before the Bella Coola valley was chosen for settlement, the discovery of Cape Scott as a suitable site for a settlement came about more by accident than design.

In some notes based on the recollections of early settlers, Bernard Dane tells of the "accidental" discovery:

The "Founder" of the first White settlement at Cape Scott . . . was one Rasmus Hansen, whom, in company with another Dane had been fishing halibut out of Seattle on the then newly discovered Fishing Banks on the North-end of Vancouver Island about the year 1894.

One of those cruises, he sought shelter in Goose Bay [Hansen Bay], which is about halfway between Cape Scott and San Josef Bay on the West side of the Island, and explored the long lagoon [Hansen Lagoon] that emptied into the bay in quest of Ducks or Geese. At the head of this lagoon he found a great stretch of Tide Meadow through which ran two nice streams, which, at the time, were full of Salmon.

At that period there were very "hard times" in the States and many people were seeking "pastures new", especially in the milder climate of the West Coast. Advantage had been taken of this and two Norwegian settlements had been started, one at Bella Coola and one at Quatsino.

—BERNARD DANE, "CAPE SCOTT"

During the latter part of the 19th century, the Canadian government actively encouraged the formation of colonies and issued a handbook that outlined the necessary requirements of a colony and its colonists.

Bernard Dane continues:

Rasmus Hansen conceived the idea that the head of this lagoon would be a very desireable spot to start a Danish settlement, and in the year following wrote a number of articles in the Danish Weekly Papers published in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska. He received many interested enquiries, which prompted him to get in touch with the Provincial Government, and with the help of Colonel Baker (the Minister of Lands), an agreement was reached whereby the four Westernmost Townships in the Cape Scott area were reserved for a Danish settlement.

The correspondence was handled by a group of Danes at Enumclaw, Washington:

Victoria, B.C., May 16th, 1896.

To the Hon. James Baker,

Minister of Immigration, Victoria, B.C.:

SIR:—We, the undersigned intending settlers, who have been at Cape Scott looking for land suitable to start a colony on, promise to form a colony of at least 75 settlers in townships 41, 42, 43, 44 Rupert District, Vancouver Island, on the terms given page 76 "Official Handbook of Information relating to the Dominion of Canada, January 1896," provided the Government will build:—

1. A road from Fisherman's Cove to Sea Otter Cove, with branches to Goose Harbour and the mouth of the San Josef River. The latter to be extended along same river to eastern line of township 41.

2. A dyke at Goose Harbour to protect the lowlands in township 43 from the tidewater.

3. Two schools for the colony and provide teachers for same.

They suggested a schedule of development in accordance with their anticipated rate of settlement over a period of four years; the letter concluded with an outline of their plans:

The colony will develop the resources of the country, especially farming and fishing. The farming will be what generally is termed "mixed farming". The fishing will be principally deep sea fishing, halibut and cod.

We consider the fishing industry as the part that must carry the colony through the first years until the farm can be able to produce and pay. It is with this in view that we intend to start at Fisherman's Cove, which gives shelter for small fishing crafts and is near the fishing banks.

We consider the marshy land in township 43 to form the backbone of the colony and, therefore, it is we who ask the Government to build the dyke for to

Schooner off-loading at Hansen Lagoon, circa 1906.

protect the land, because we have learned by experience and investigation that to start a colony in heavy timbered land, even with the best of soil, is almost an impossibility.

We are well aware of the necessity of co-operation for the small farmer and intend, from the start, to have a small steamer or steam schooner of our own to carry colonists, their goods and provisions into the country, and fish and farm products of the country to the market.

Very respectfully yours,

Y.Chr. Jensen
Peter Thomsen.
R. Hansen.
Nels C. Nelson.

The government response to the letter was favourable. Some of the details of the proposals were modified and government expenditure was subject to strict limits, but the Cape Scott area was reserved for the colonists.

LESTER PETERSON: People came out then with the knowledge that they were going to work. It was going to be no paradise, no utopia, but there was going to be a certain degree of freedom and a certain degree of local autonomy.

I think it was much the same as many others—Hansen probably dreamed of a little bit more freedom from working on a halibut boat, in the same way as my father later on dreamed of a little more freedom to get out of an iron mine. So it was not with the thought that you'd avoid work but with the thought that you might have a little of your own freedom. And it was possible to form a colony which could be very much like the modern municipality in which you'd have your own local laws in a framework of federal and provincial laws.

Before leaving Enumclaw, the organizers of the colony formed a "provisional company" and elected a board of directors. The directors were responsible for any further contact with the British Columbia government, and they laid out the rules for joining the colony. The basic requirement for people who wanted to join was the payment of $50 to a fund "which shall be used for means of communication, a co-operative store, and other enterprises for the growth and improvement of the colony."*

LESTER PETERSON: In 1896, two men went to the Cape. One stayed the winter, [N.C.] Nelson, and reported to his group the next spring that this was satisfactory and in March [19] 1897, the group went up on the *Willapa*. The women and children went up on the *Willapa* and they were accompanied by Ernest Cleveland, the government surveyor, who was to lay out the area. And some of the men went up on a small schooner, the *Floyborg*.

Bernard Dane describes the voyage:

On this voyage they came via the West Coast, and were caught by a storm off Cape Scott breaking their Main Boom. They rounded Cape Scott and anchored in 18 fathoms off Fisherman's Bay but during the night the wind veered to westerly and their Anchor-line parted and they were driven to sea, breaking the rudder post also at this time.

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* *Provisional Rules for Danish Colony at Cape Scott, Vancouver Island, B.C.*

They managed to navigate the vessel, rounding Cape Scott again and manouvering her into the lagoon.

They started to repair her there, but before these were completed she broke adrift in a storm, beaching herself again further up the Lagoon and suffering more damage.

—B. DANE

During the first summer, a regular steamer service was arranged with the CPR, and a cooperative store was organized. To supplement their meagre financial resources, some of the men went fishing for sockeye salmon at Rivers Inlet, about 50 miles away on the mainland coast. Although the fishing was poor in 1897, the trip to Rivers Inlet later became an annual event for Cape Scott fishermen.

In July, the government surveyor returned to Victoria and noted in his report some of the initial difficulties faced by the colonists:

Victoria, B.C., July 23rd, 1897.

Sir,—I have the honour to submit the following report upon my work during the past four months in the Cape Scott colony.

Acting under your instructions of March 19th, I left Victoria the following day, accompanied by one assistant and a party of eight or ten colonists.

After a slow passage of five days we arrived at Fisherman's Bay—the landing place of the settlement—and proceeded at once to examine the country nearby, including the meadow and lagoon lying one and a half miles south-west of Fisherman's Bay, in order to determine the best method for the subdivision of the grass and timbered lands . . . .

The area of meadow lands referred to above, was found upon completion of a traverse to be much less than was anticipated, consequently the number of ten-acre blocks into which it might be divided would not be sufficient to grant one to each member of the colony: that is to say, there were more eighty-acre blocks of upland than ten-acre blocks of meadow. The colonists were therefore given the option of a block of meadow and eighty acres nearby, or a quarter section just outside the section subdivided into eighties.

The area of grass land flooded only at extremely high tides was found to be one hundred and twenty-four acres; while the area of tidal lands, locally known as the lagoon and which are flooded at every tide, is five hundred and ten acres . . . .

This part of the country has been amply described in former reports but it may be said here that the greater part of the area included in the present settlement is timbered with a fairly heavy growth of pine, cedar, yellow cedar, and hemlock, with considerable areas of faily open land covered with light scrubby timber . . . .

The soil, generally, is wet, but will no doubt be brought into satisfactory condition by drainage of the open flats spoken of above.

The country has numerous small rounded hills, all of which are covered with timber.

Near the shore the sal-lal is almost impenetrable, but grows much lighter as one goes back from the sea coast.

As the past season has been exceptionally wet over a great part of the Province, and expecially the coast, it is difficult to judge at all accurately as to the humidity of the climate. From the records of Mr. Nels C. Nelson, the mete-

Xumptaspi, Hope Island, 1899. Better known as Nahwitti, this village was between Cape Scott and Sointula. (C. F. Newcombe photo; BCPM Ethnology Division photo DN238).

orological observer at this point, extending over the past three months—a copy of which are appended—and also from his observations during the past winter it is estimated that the average annual rainfall lies between sixty to eighty inches. Vegetables and small fruits were in a flourishing condition at Shushartie Bay when I passed there early in July, and as this point is only eighteen miles east of the colony it seems probably that the same conditions of humidity obtain at each place, and that the same products would grow equally well at Fisherman's Bay . . . .

This section of Vancouver Island seems better adapted for dairy farming and stock raising, together with the development of the deep sea fisheries, than for any other purpose. Two or three experienced dairy and stock men, as well as a number of fishermen, among those now settled on the Islands, will no doubt be able to test these branches of work in the near future. Many new settlers from various parts of the United States—principally California and Minnesota—are expected during the autumn, having already signified their intention of joining the colony. The coming winter will afford ample opportunity for the settlers to get in good working order.

It was expected, before an examination was made, that Sea Otter Cove—lying about nine miles to the south-west of Fisherman's Bay—would be the harbour for the colony, but upon looking into the matter, this cove provided an undesirable place for the headquarters of the settlement, not only because the harbour is inferior and difficult to enter—being quite impossible for steamers at low water—but because of the poor character of the land in the immediate

vicinity. It was consequently decided that Fisherman's Bay should be the point of call for the steamers. Shushartie Bay, about twenty miles to the eastward, is the nearest available first-class harbour, and during very heavy weather would be the only place at which the effects of the colonists might be landed in safety. Fisherman's Bay lies open to the northward, and though not greatly disturbed by a westerly wind, a northerly or northwesterly gale may produce such a surf as to make landing dangerous or even impossible. From observations during the spring and early summer it may be said that from March to November little, if any, difficulty will be encountered from this cause, and that during the whole year there may be but very few days when a boat could not land freight or passengers. Doubtless the colonists will shortly have communication with the coast cities by the inside or east coast route instead of by the somewhat uncertain boisterous west coast—an uncertainty made painfully real during the past season by the failure of the transportation company to forward supplies at the time expected, thereby leaving us very short of provisions for about three weeks . . . .

It may be said with certainty that if our northern coast can be successfully colonized, the Danish colony at Cape Scott will furnish the proof as no better class of men for the undertaking could be found. They are without exception, hardy, industrious, and intelligent, and well deserve success.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

Ernest A. Cleveland
***Sessional Papers*, 1898**

EVA PETERSON: A school teacher [Carl B. Christensen] came in, a bachelor, and he had adopted two sons, and still the quota was too small for a school. So he adopted another son, a boy out of the home in Vancouver, and that brought up the quota so they could start the first school up there.

As settlers came in, they built the school and the community hall. There was no lumber brought in; it was all cut out of the bush.

JOHANNE HARESTAD: My mother and father, Mary and Carl Rasmussen, went to Cape Scott as pioneers in 1897 from Rossholt, Wisconsin. They later left Cape Scott and went back to their home in Wisconsin, and they were there for some years and then decided to come back again. My father was a steam engineer and when they first came as pioneers, he brought in a little sawmill, hoping to saw lumber for homes for the settlers, but eventually went broke because the people needed lumber but they had no money to pay him for it.

Although a number of the first settlers left before the spring of 1898, the population rose as newcomers continued to arrive.

PETRA AMSDEN; I arrived at Cape Scott with my parents in 1899. My father was Bertold Christian Benson Bekker. I was four years old. We came on the *Willapa* and the day that we arrived the minister [Jens Jensen Mylund], who had been engaged to be a member of the settlement, was leaving. The church could not pay his salary.

There was no wharf and they came out in a large boat—I think they called them dories—which were rowed by a man standing up. All the supplies for the settlement were brought ashore in that way.

There was a house near the store and we were able to live in that house for a very short time. I remember mother's first wash-day. She was surrounded by Indians. There were three or four women sitting cross-legged on the floor watching her. She gave them some soap which pleased them very much.

Unlike the settlers at Bella Coola, the Cape Scott colonists appear to have had little contact with the Indians. The closest Indian village was the Kwakiutl village of Nahwitti on Hope Island. This group had once known the Cape Scott area thoroughly for Franz Boas listed 20 geographical names for the San Josef River—Cape Scott—Fisherman's Bay area in 1934. Today the Indian reserve of Ouchtum, a fishing station of 12 acres, is to be found along the shores of a small cove northwest of Guise Bay, but it was used only intermittently while the colonists lived in the area.

PETRA AMSDEN: After that, we stayed in a two-roomed log house near the lagoon and there was a stream flowing past the house. One room held our furniture that we'd brought up and the other room we had to sleep and cook. And the following year, our house was built. It was built with the help of settlers. Father built so much and the others got together and the women did the cooking and it was what you call a bee—a housing bee.

My father wanted a farm. He wanted to carve a sort of country estate out of the forest. He started to carve out a farm and till the soil in a densely forested district. The soil was very good but all the trees had to be removed. He had a crosscut saw, a double-bit axe, a stump puller—a small one—and steel cable, I suppose it was, and a gun. He had about four or five guns of different types. That was about all his tools. And his knowledge of cultivating the soil, and he was a very good husbandman.

We had no horses up there when we arrived, though they bought a horse later on, and a mule. But they were not very successful because the horse's hooves are

"Niels J. Nielsen on top; Theo Holm handing him the pole; Agnes Jorgensen on top; Anna Sorensen, Hans Jensen standing; Ellen Holm and Marie Nielsen with huckleberry branch; Petra Bekker serving and Hannah Jensen Frederiksen. School in background." Cape Scott, circa 1900. (Karl Christensen photo).

not suited to muddy and mirey places. We had a steer that did all our pulling and all our heavy work. He had been a rather ferocious beast but they cut off his horns and put a ring in his nose and the poor fellow was fairly tame after that. He never lost his ferocious attitude but he became almost a pet with my sister and myself.

We had no carts with wheels, but if you explore through the woods you will find that the red cedar puts out a side shoot and when you cut that off at the trunk you get something that looks like a ski runner or a sleigh runner. Well, you look till you find two that matched and then they were smoothed down so that you had two sleigh runners. Then they put a sled on top of that and everything that was brought down from the store—heavy things like sugar, and meal and flour and oats and anything that was heavy—was dragged and transported that way.

When we eventually were able to harvest the fields it was timothy hay that grew there—wild timothy hay which was very good as cattle food. But of course it must be harvested at such a time that it didn't drop its seed, because if it was harvested and dried and the seed had dropped then, of course, most of the nourishment disappeared. Every year I remember father saying that he had never yet lost a harvest and he did not lose a harvest up at Cape Scott. It was the drying of the hay that was difficult, because Cape Scott is a very wet district.

We always had a garden—strawberries, raspberries, and red currants, white currants, black currants, and father planted apple trees. But large fruit trees were not satisfactory. It was my job to pick one quart of berries every day and that was terrible because I was afraid of the forest and I soon picked every bush that was near the house so then I walked a mile and a half to two miles down to the store and picked it on the beach, because then I was near the beach and wasn't afraid. But as the years went by, I lost my fear. There were blue huckleberries and red huckleberries and we could get cranberries in the marshes.

Father shot deer, and geese, and ducks. We had pintails, canvasbacks, butterballs, and mallards. Then there were mudhens. They had to be very careful because they became rancid and fishy. The waterfowl were all right when they arrived but if they stayed too long on the mudflats they got a bad flavour. Also there were wild grouse in the woods and they were good too. We had to live on what father could shoot; otherwise we had our hens and our cattle and so on and we killed a pig every year. We never ran short of supplies, not really. They ran short of tobacco once, the men did. You never forget that; oh, that was terrible.

After we moved into our own home, I eventually went to school. I guess there were eight or nine children. I can't be certain because they came and went. Reading, writing and arithmetic were taught well, and after a while Mr. Christensen decided to give us French and German as well. I can still remember a little bit of German, but I don't think any German would be able to recognize it. Father taught me to swear in German, just to tease my mother.

Mr. Christensen was a charming man. He was a very fine mathematician but his joy was literature. His favourite author was Joseph Conrad, and his favourite expression was, "Joseph Conrad did not describe a storm, he created one within the pages." And he taught me all the love of literature, history and geography that I imbibed afterwards which has been a joy all my life.

Father was an educated man. He spoke four languages, and a smattering of Greek. He taught me the names of plants and flowers in Latin. Father, although a minister's son, was not very religious, but the principles of religion and the guidelines for living were all there and must be obeyed. I think perhaps the first was truthfulness.

Some years after he left Cape Scott (in 1906 or 1907) Bertold Bekker wrote an article describing some features of the area:

The lagoon is a stretch of mud flats; the upper end is grass land. In 1902 and 1903 nine of the settlers dyked this grass land and divided it among themselves, each taking ten acres. This soil is black and very rich, subsoil blue sand, with traces of gold. The dyke is 1,100 feet long, bottom width twenty feet, three feet on top, and seven feet high. There is a sluice with four gates and a box sluice. The material is taken on the spot. A ditch fourteen feet wide and three feet deep was dug on each side, the dirt thrown and wheeled up thus forming the dyke. The turf was carefully cut in square pieces and piled, forming a protective coat over the interior. Afterwards it was fenced on both sides and on top was made a gravel path. Summer tide never floods the entire mud flats, consequently never reaches the dyke. From the dyke to the inlet of the flats, called Goose Harbour, is about two miles. The inlet is 300 feet wide. At low tide the water depth is only a few inches. The highest tide is here fifteen feet, and at the dyke six feet. The lagoon is Cape Scott's sporting place.

In summer it is the scene of great activity. Cow bells are ringing and vehicles are travelling the good broad road the Government has built through the grass lands to the dyke. Mowers and scythes are busy, and in the latter part of August hundreds of haycocks are seen. The air is dense with the smell of cured hay, meadow lark and robin voice contention in rippling notes, and the pygmy owl is busy hunting grasshoppers. A wonderful smiling spot, surrounded by morose and silent forests.

But see the same lagoon in late Fall and Winter. Then the ditches grow to creeks and the creeks into roaring rivers. Everywhere are sounds of water in motion, and in the air is a wheezing, seething mass of flapping bird wings.

—*The Daily Colonist*, DECEMBER 20, 1919

Despite the enthusiasm and hard work of the settlers, the human activity did not last very long. Bernard Dane explains:

The peak of settlement was reached in 1900, when the population numbered about 90 in all . . . .

The problem of earning money for necessities was also an additional hardship. Rivers Inlet gave poor returns in '98, 1900, and 1901—and some of the settlers ROWED to the logging camps at Bear River (Johnstone Straits) about 125 miles, in quest of work. However in 1902 Rivers Inlet gave good returns, and became, from that year on, the main source of income for the settlers.

LESTER PETERSON: By about 1902 the provincial government had lost sight of Cape Scott, somehow. At the time there were very rapid changes of government, and there was no continuity. Then the area was thrown open to private preemption and the colony literally disbanded. By 1907 when the last steamer called at Fisherman's Bay, it was pretty well the end of what you could call the colony at Cape Scott.

They thought that Fisherman's Bay would be a harbour but in certain winds it was not safe. Hansen Lagoon was too shallow and it wasn't safe from winds. When they migrated to Holberg where there was a safe harbour, but it didn't help Cape Scott. They overcame this [problem] partly in 1901, when they built their first community boat, the *Cape Scott*, and it served as best it could along the coast until 1910 when it went down with two men on board. They built a second *Cape Scott* and it served until about 1920.

Fields and dyke, Cape Scott, circa 1900.

A road was promised in the original agreement when the settlement reached a certain number—such things as 75 colonists were entitled to a school, and 90 colonists were entitled to a road. A beginning of a road was put in from Fisherman's Bay for about two miles, and before the War a road was put in from Holberg. The main problem was that they didn't meet. All the bridges were built and so on, but the two ends never did meet.

It was clear that survival at Cape Scott was going to be very difficult, if not impossible, without a safe harbour and without a road link with the rest of Vancouver Island. Some colonists were attracted to the nearby San Josef Valley because it had deep and fertile soil and it was closer to the sheltered waters of Quatsino Sound. In the next few years, more and more colonists moved from Cape Scott to the San Josef Valley. There was no official disbanding of the colony, but the cooperative store was closed and the Danish colonists were joined by other settlers—many of them Danish, or from other parts of Scandinavia—scattered widely between Cape Scott and Holberg, at the head of West Arm.

PETRA AMSDEN: Those who came to Cape Scott had an idea of having a little Denmark away from home. And in the main, they were very nice people. Dreamers? Idealists? No, only my father and maybe Mr. Christensen.

The dyke was built by everybody and each man gave so many hours free. There was a lot of voluntary labour. The government gave so much money each year for repairing the road. But there were no connections. They had gone right up to Cape Scott and isolated themselves.

I remember that we would have rainstorms that lasted two weeks. That sounds very depressing but to people who are making their own comforts, there's something reassuring hearing the rain pattering on the roof when you're cozy and warm indoors with a cup of coffee and a very nice wild goose or wild duck for dinner.

One of Theo Frederiksen's hay fields in the fall. Guise Bay in the background.

Some of the most pleasant days were harvest days in the fields when mother would bring down coffee and cakes for father and we would sit in a haystack and there was the odour of the wild hay drying, the sunshine, a light breeze, and the crowing, caw, caw, caw, of the crows. They were so busy picking out the worms and caterpillars after the hay was cut. And I can never forget the feeling of delight over that.

Another thing that was so nice when father was clearing land, we arranged the bonfire to see that it was safe and to build it up so that next morning everything would be burnt up. I remember going out there, and the sparks would rise into the sky so that you could hardly tell which were stars and which were sparks.

If the moon was full, I'd ask to go out and I'd run straight down the road and the moon moved. I'd run races with the moon. All those things that children never experience when they have so many things thrust on them. And it was there for nothing.

A Legend

Once upon a time a fishing vessel anchored off the cape and sent a boat to shore in search of fresh water. The men got the water, and also nuggets as big as acorns. The beach was strewn with them, was the report. The vessel went to Victoria with a cargo of fish and many nuggets. Afterwards the ship went back for further investigation, but was lost with all on board. Since nobody could recover the spot where the gold was found "An extraordinary low tide," explains the white man. "The spirit of the cape took it and hid it in the woods," says the Indian, and he is probably right. There surely is a nugget under each tree and tiny root on the north end of Vancouver Island! Remove them and the nuggets will grow, and the more you dig the better they grow, transformed into waving grainfields.

This is Cape Scott, admired by the whites, feared by the Indians, loved by the few who know.

—Bertold Bekker

SOINTULA

The colonies at Bella Coola and Cape Scott were established largely in response to specific economic conditions in North America. To a certain extent the same is true for the Finnish colony on Malcolm Island, conceived by a group of Finnish miners already in British Columbia. However, unlike the other colonies, this one would be utopian.

A considerable number of Finns had worked on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and when that work was completed, some of them found work in the coal mines in the Nanaimo area of Vancouver Island. Work in the mines was dangerous, and there were frequent accidents. Wages were low and any attempt by the miners to improve their situation was firmly resisted by the mine owner, James Dunsmuir. When the North Wellington mines were exhausted, Dunsmuir opened new mines at Extension and then at Ladysmith. The miners had to move their homes each time, if they wanted to keep their jobs. With very little work to be found elsewhere in the area, they had no choice but to move. Living conditions in the mining towns were, in many ways, as bad as working conditions in the mines.

WAYNE HOMER: (paraphrasing the history of Sointula written in Finnish by Matti Halminen in 1936*): Dunsmuir was a slave-driver who gave his employees a harsh time and is said to have introduced bootleggers and company beer outlets to ply the disgruntled workers with booze to keep them quiet. It was under these disgusting working conditions that the first Finnish Brotherhood of Temperance Societies was born in Nanaimo. This new revolt against drunkenness and associated vices spread rapidly across Canada and into the United States. It was from this unbearable harassment and miserable working conditions in the coal mines that the idea of establishing a collective workers' commune under socialist principles was born.

KAISA RIKSMAN: They had heard of something similar in France. A man named Fourier had had a colony, like a Shangri-la or something. So these people asked the B.C. government for land to which they could move as a group. And then they wrote to Australia to Mr. Kurikka and asked him to come to be the leader of this group. He wrote back and said that he was very ill and he was in hospital and he didn't have a penny to his name, but if they would send him money he would certainly come. Which he did.

Matti Kurikka was well-known in Finland as an author and a playwright. As editor-in-chief of the Helsinki newspaper *Työmies* [The Worker], he wrote articles on a wide range of subjects, among them socialism, class struggle, the value and dignity of physical labour, the status of women in the community, and

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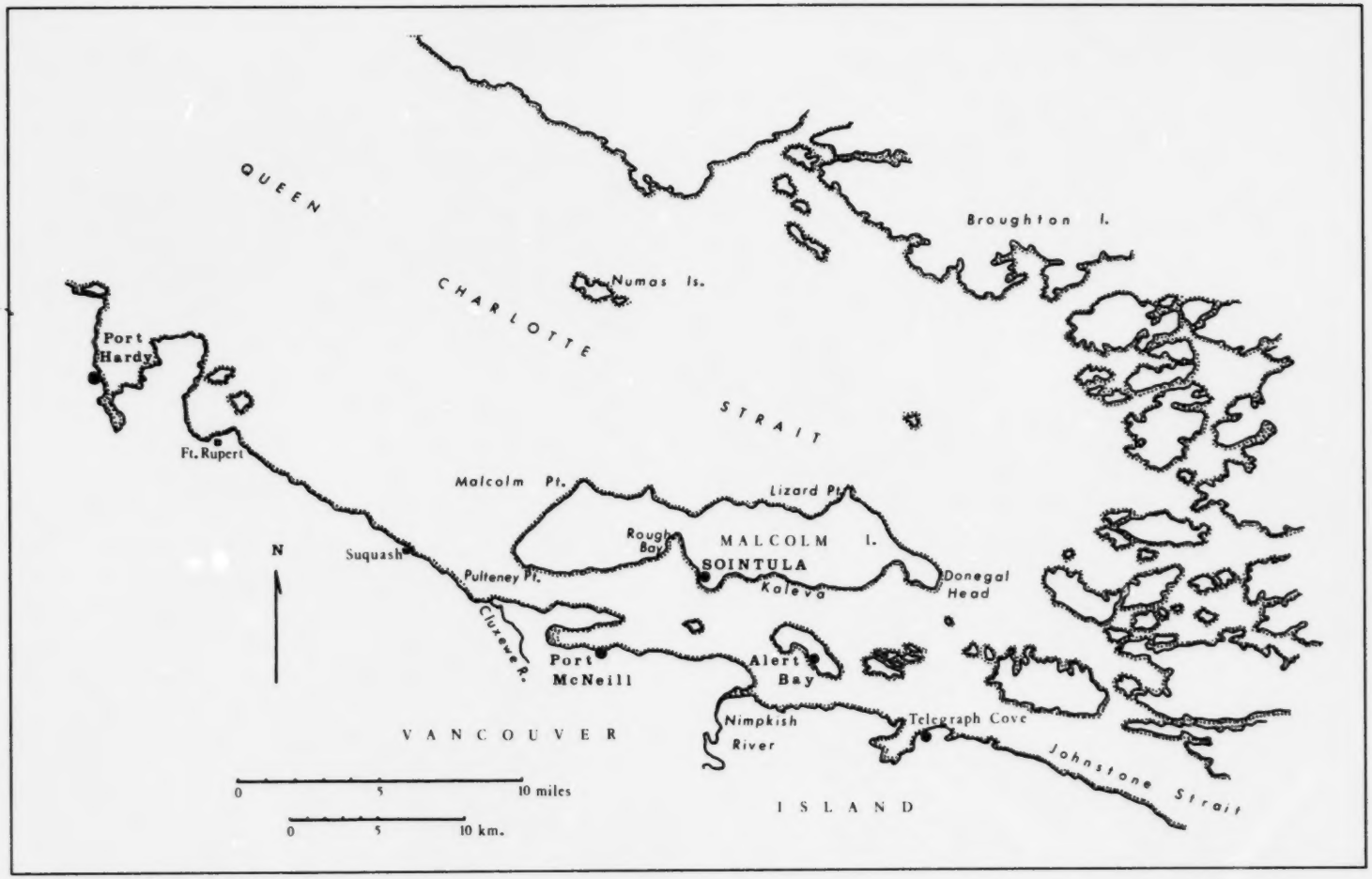
* Matti Halminen, *Sointula, Kalevan Kansen ja Kanada Suomalaisten Historiaa.*

Opposite: Leaders of proposed Sointula colony in Finland, circa 1900. Left to right: K. K. Nord, Matti Kurikka, unknown, E. J. Roini, A. B. Mäkelä. (A. B. Williams photo).


QUEEN
CHARLOTTE
STRAIT
Broughton I.
Numas Is.
Port Hardy
Ft. Rupert
Malcolm Pt.
Lizard Pt.
Rough Bay
MALCOLM I.
SOINTULA
Donegal Head
Kaleva
N
Suquash
Pulteney Pt.
Clurawe R.
Port McNeill
Alert Bay
Nimpkish River
Telegraph Cove
VANCOUVER
ISLAND
Johnstone Strait
0 5 10 miles
0 5 10 km.

the need for universal suffrage. Kurikka had left Finland in protest against the political situation there, but his attempt to establish a Finnish community in Australia was a failure. He arrived in Nanaimo in August 1900.

Kurikka was a typical utopian socialist. His philosophic underpinnings were the usual moral socialist ideal of Saint-Simon and the co-operative philosophy of Robert Owen. He firmly believed the power of love, justice and humanity would combine to create a new society. His diagnosis of and prescription for the world follows:

> **Bourgeois society is in a state of decay. To this rotting world must be revealed the possibility of utopian society; there must be created a model which is found upon altruism; once this model is seen, people can no longer continue their former lives, but will hasten . . . to make it explicit to the rest of the world.**
>
> —J. Donald Wilson, "Matti Kurikka: Finnish-Canadian Intellectual", *B.C. Studies*

Kurikka's vision of that model society is outlined by Aili Anderson:

Matti Kurikka was an educated man, and a visionary. He dreamed of founding an all-Finnish colony, a spot in the outside world that his native Finland would be proud of. He felt that to all those who had left Finland to escape the oppression of the Russia Tsar's rule, a Finnish colony would be like a nerve centre that would hold them together, no matter how widely scattered they would actually be. His ideas included the rejection of the church, and from his writings about his dream we quote: "In this colony a high, cultural life of freedom would be built, away from priests who have defiled the high morals of Christianity, away from the churches that destroy peace, away from all the evils of the outside world."

—Aili Anderson, *History of Sointula*

Kaisa Riksman: When these people asked the government for land, the Land Office threw a lot of maps at them and said, "Take your choice." And they picked Malcolm Island because it was by the sea and seemed like the only place where they could have farms, because their idea was to make their living through farming.

Malcolm Island is located at the northern end of Johnstone Strait, between northern Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia. About 15 miles long and roughly two and a half miles wide, it was heavily forested with cedar, spruce, fir and hemlock.

While negotiations were carried on with the British Columbia government to obtain the island for a settlement, a Finnish newspaper, *Aika* [Time], was started in Nanaimo. In it, Kurikka wrote eloquent articles about the idea of the colony. He also travelled across the United States encouraging Finns to join the colony. At the same time, A. B. Makela, a former colleague of Kurikka's on *Työmies*, was asked to join the group. He arrived in Nanaimo in 1901.

The Kalevan Kansen Colonisation Company was then incorporated and a set of rules were drawn up for the colony. Membership shares would cost $200 for adults, and people who could not pay immediately could work to earn their share. The colony was to be "an independent, self-sustaining enterprise", based on farming, logging, and fishing.

In November 1901 an agreement was signed by the company and the provincial government, which detailed the terms upon which Malcolm Island was made available for the colony. Although the company was given immediate

control of the island, ownership papers would be granted seven years after 350 men had built homes, and improvements worth $2.50 an acre had been made. Permanent residents were to become British subjects, and children were to attend school where instruction would be in English. There would be no taxation for seven years, except a $3 poll tax, provided that the colony carried out its own public works projects. All such projects were subject to the approval of the Minister of Lands, and a yearly report had to be made to him. If the colony was a success, the government would make another grant of land to the colonists.

A small group of men was selected to make the first examination of the island, and their trip north was as eventful as the voyages of the original Bella Coola and Cape Scott settlers had been.

The first members of the Colony to go to Malcolm Island left Nanaimo on December 6, 1901. They travelled in a sailboat owned and captained by Johan Mikkelson. Theodore Tanner was elected leader of the group. The others were Kalle Hendrickson, Otto Ross and Malakias Kytomaa. Mostly they sailed, but sometimes there was no wind and they rowed. After passing through Seymour Narrows a shotgun went off accidently in the boat and Mikkelson's hand was hurt. The others administered what first aid they could and got him finally to Alert Bay. He was sent to Nanaimo on the first steamer. He lost only his thumb although at first the doctors thought his arm would have to be amputated. The others reached Malcolm Island on December 15, and anchored at Rough Bay.

—AILI ANDERSON

KAISA RIKSMAN: It just happened to be during a big storm. In fact, it was such a big storm that there hasn't been any like it since. It blew all the trees down on Haddington Island nearby and these men had to take shelter in some big tank that some outfit had left. So they didn't think too much of it at the time, but anyway, it

Women and children of Sointula, circa 1902.

didn't scare them enough not to come back. They went back and reported that they found the island favourable, and two more men came who were the builders, the carpenters, and they built the log cabin that's in Rough Bay. They built it, and of course, a sauna was the next one.

There were seven all together, and one, Mr. Wilander, brought his wife along, so she was the first woman. They were the only people here when I arrived, I was 22 then. I came from Finland along with this other lady. Our husbands were here in Sointula already. They had heard about Sointula from Mr. Kurikka when he went on his lecture tours. He and Mr. Salmi came here, and then I and Mrs. Salmi and our four children came to Sointula together.

We arrived on June 3, 1902. We arrived here late at night. It was pitch black of course, and all the bay was covered with these big kelps—these great big snakes in the water with these great big heads on them. The boat tied up to some sort of a slip and we had to walk along these logs to the shore where this little shack was.

In this log cabin there were five double bunks for all these families. Hay was piled on these bunks for a mattress, and my husband and I and the two children got one of these bunks for our own.

The first meeting to decide on how to proceed and just what they were to do was held in June of 1902. And they held a three-day celebration at that time where they had meetings and had plays and sang.

They were going to share everything. Everyone would be working for the common good. No one owned anything separately and individually. They planned to farm and log, and all the proceeds would be divided equally.

I think the main idea was to have a free society. Especially, they emphasized that women should have equal rights with men. At that time women had no property rights, they had no rights whatsoever in wages, so this was one thing that was applied here. The women had a dollar a day wages, as the men did, and they had a right to speak at meetings, and they had a right to vote. And they had to work. Everyone had to work.

Another thing they wanted was a society where there would be no government church. There would be no liquor vending, and no women should have to sell themselves, whatever that would mean. They could have religion, but no one would be forcing any particular religion, and they could believe as they wished.

The company was to look after all the children—all the expenses, clothing, food, and schooling. No one would be charged extra for children. The idea was that later on the children would be the workers and they would look after the elders. All the women went to work in the kitchen or laundry or wherever they were needed, and they had a nursery where their children were sent. They could be left there overnight, but most of the women took their children home in the evening.

That summer the colonists officially named the settlement Sointula—"the place of harmony." There were now over 100 people in the colony and the future seemed promising, despite the lack of money to buy essential equipment and supplies.

KAISA RIKSMAN: Each family was supposed to pay $200, but that's where the trouble really began. A lot of people arrived and they didn't have the $200, so the colony didn't have the money it expected to have. But they didn't turn anyone away, so everything they bought was mortgaged.

The main industry was going to be farming, but they found that it just wouldn't do. This area wasn't meant for farming, and it meant so much work

clearing land that they would all starve before they got started. So they turned to logging and fishing.

They weren't really farmers. The people that came here were expert tradesmen in their own line—tailors and blacksmiths and whatever was necessary—and they were educated. They were not ignorant people by any means. Mr. Makela, he was a very well educated man. He had gone through university in Finland and he was translating English books into Finnish. And they had a doctor [Dr. Oswald Beckman], here too.

When they saw that they couldn't farm, they had to turn to logging to make a living. And then to make homes for people to live in, they had to build a sawmill. That was the first thing that was built, and then a blacksmith's shop.

RICHARD MICHELSON: I was born in Wellington, B.C., in 1894. My father's name was Takkomaki and my mother's name was Pauna. I was registered under the name Takkomaki, but my father changed his name a little bit afterwards. He came to Sointula in 1902, more or less to get out of slavery in the mines. He used to work in the mines in Wellington and Extension.

For the first couple of nights we stayed in a log house until the tents were raised for the different families. We lived in the tents until the sawmill got around to making lumber for building houses for different families.

When we got here we didn't get any money. There were no wages paid to anybody as far as I can understand. Everybody was registered for a dollar a day for the time they worked. Everybody worked, including all the women; some of them were in the laundry, some in the cookhouse, and some of them looked after the children. I remember my mother worked in the laundry.

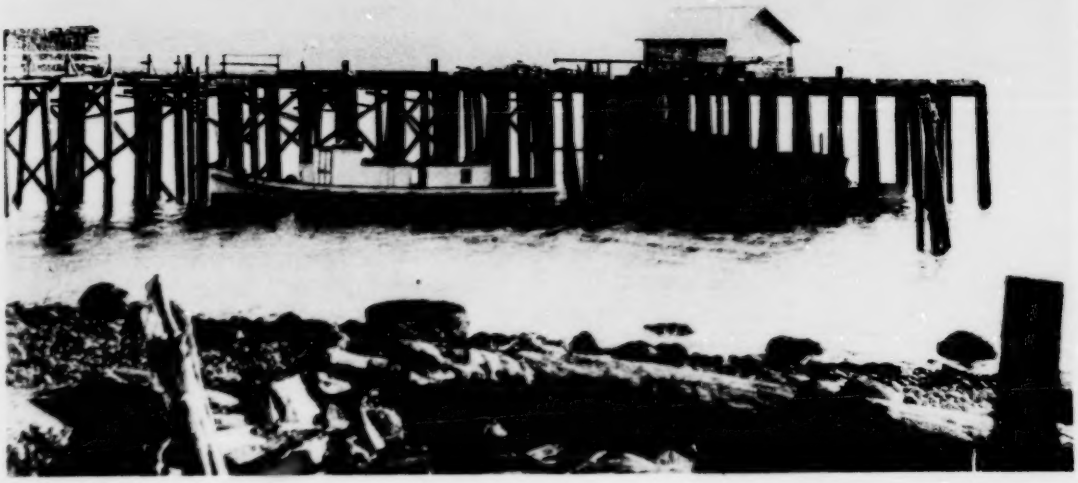
They had a mill and a foundry. They used to make their forms and melt their iron, and they made different parts for machinery. They made charcoal, and I guess it's quite a business to make charcoal, because you have to have a watchman day and night. There was one man, a tailor by trade, and they set him to watch the charcoal. He didn't like being put into a job like that, but you had to do whatever was necessary at the time.

I worked as a whistle punk for a logging operation. There were two of us youngsters and one would take the morning shift and the other one would take the afternoon shift. We were about eight years old. The camp was down at Pulteney Point at that time. The colony had [steam] donkeys down there, and bunkhouses. They had their scouts going around looking where they could get the logs out easiest.

ARVO TYNJALA: They opened up dairy places. Of course, there wasn't any open ground here, but they had to feed their cows. They had to go elsewhere for the feed; and they went as far as the head of Knight Inlet and the head of Kingcome Inlet to get their grass on the river flats.

Nobody had any private property or anything like that. It was all one community under a sort of cooperative. It was just like one household, you know—everyone was together. They dined together, worked together, and tried to make things go the best they knew how.

RICHARD MICHELSON: I think about once a week they had a general meeting. As youngsters, we used to go to the meetings, but we didn't know much about what was going on. I remember one time I went there and I fell asleep against the table. I woke up in the middle of the night and the meeting was all over and the only one around was a watchman. He didn't wake me up, but when I woke up, well, I just got up and walked home.



Vinetta *and* Lotla, *boats owned by the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Co., Sointula, circa 1902.*

A housing shortage caused a great deal of concern. There simply weren't enough houses being built to accommodate all the colonists. Living in a tent had been acceptable during the summer, but with the onset of winter, the crowding and discomfort gave rise to compaints, and prompted some people to leave. An attempt was made to alleviate the problem, but the result only made things worse.

ARVO TYNIALA: In 1902 a kind of apartment house was being built. The first two storeys were divided into apartments and on the third storey there was the meeting hall. On the 29th day of January, 1903, that thing burned down. It was built out of rough, wet lumber—straight green stuff that was newly from the woods. You know how it dries; there were big cracks in the walls and there must have been an awful draught in there.

KAISA RIKSMAN: They didn't have any definite knowledge as to how it started, but they surmised that it had started from where the heating system pipes had been extended with a wooden flue. They didn't have enough money to buy more pipes, so they decided that would do.

When the fire started, most of the people were at a meeting upstairs, so that's one of the reasons that so many people were burnt to death.

I had two children at that time and the youngest was fretful that evening, so I wasn't able to go to the meeting. I went to bed early, but I was still awake when I heard someone crying that there was a fire. I jumped out of bed and looked around to see what I would take, and then realised that I could only take the children. So I took one under each arm and I went out.

I decided to go out the front entrance, which was one floor lower. And when I got there, there was so much draught the smoke was going through the doorway, along the top of the door and rising up to the top of the ceiling, so that it was all clear, and I was able to get out with no discomfort at all.

Many other people were jumping out of windows because they were afraid to go through the front entrance, because of the kerosene barrel that was stored right by the door and they expected it to explode.

Eleven people died in the fire—eight children and three adults.

Word was got to Vancouver and people sent clothing and food from there. Of course, travel was so slow it took quite a while to get word down there and again for the boat to come up with supplies.

ARVO TYNJALA: That was a big disaster—just about the finish. It would have been worse yet, but we got quite a bit of help from the outside, from Vancouver. People collected and sent clothing and all kinds of help.

Work was quickly begun on the construction of houses for all families with children, but in the aftermath of the fire there was increasing dissension in the colony as people discussed the possible causes of the fire. There were even stories of the fire being started deliberately to hide evidence of the embezzlement of colony funds. Nothing ever came of such stories, but the disaster left bitter division in the colony.

Worse yet, the economic situation was not improving. Logging was not profitable because timber prices were low and operating costs were high. Low prices for salmon meant low incomes for fishermen. Because of the long distances between Malcolm Island and possible markets, the output of the brick factory was used mainly on the island, and while the foundry and the blacksmith shop were of great value to the colony, they did not bring in much income. Only the sawmill showed a profit, and late in 1903 construction of a new mill began. Nevertheless, the population totalled 238 at the end of the year, up from 193 twelve months earlier, and there was renewed hope in the future.

This hope was dashed by another setback.

Kurikka was in Vancouver at the time when North Vancouver notices about bridge building contracts over Capilano and Seymour rivers were in the papers. On the advice of a certain Finnish businessman from Seattle, Kurikka placed a $3,000 offer for the contract in the name of the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Co. Ltd., and $150 down to hold it. This sum would be lost if the colony didn't take the contract.

Many long discussions were held at meetings in Sointula over this, and new estimates made. The general feeling was that it would be wiser to withdraw the offer and lose the $150 than to go ahead. But Kurikka talked them into it. He envisioned better and larger contracts with Vancouver later, once they got in on the building of the city. He insisted that the colony's financial situation was such that it forced them into taking on the contract. All the timbers and lumber needed could be taken from Malcolm Island. That would help so much it would surely turn out a profitable undertaking. The contract was signed.

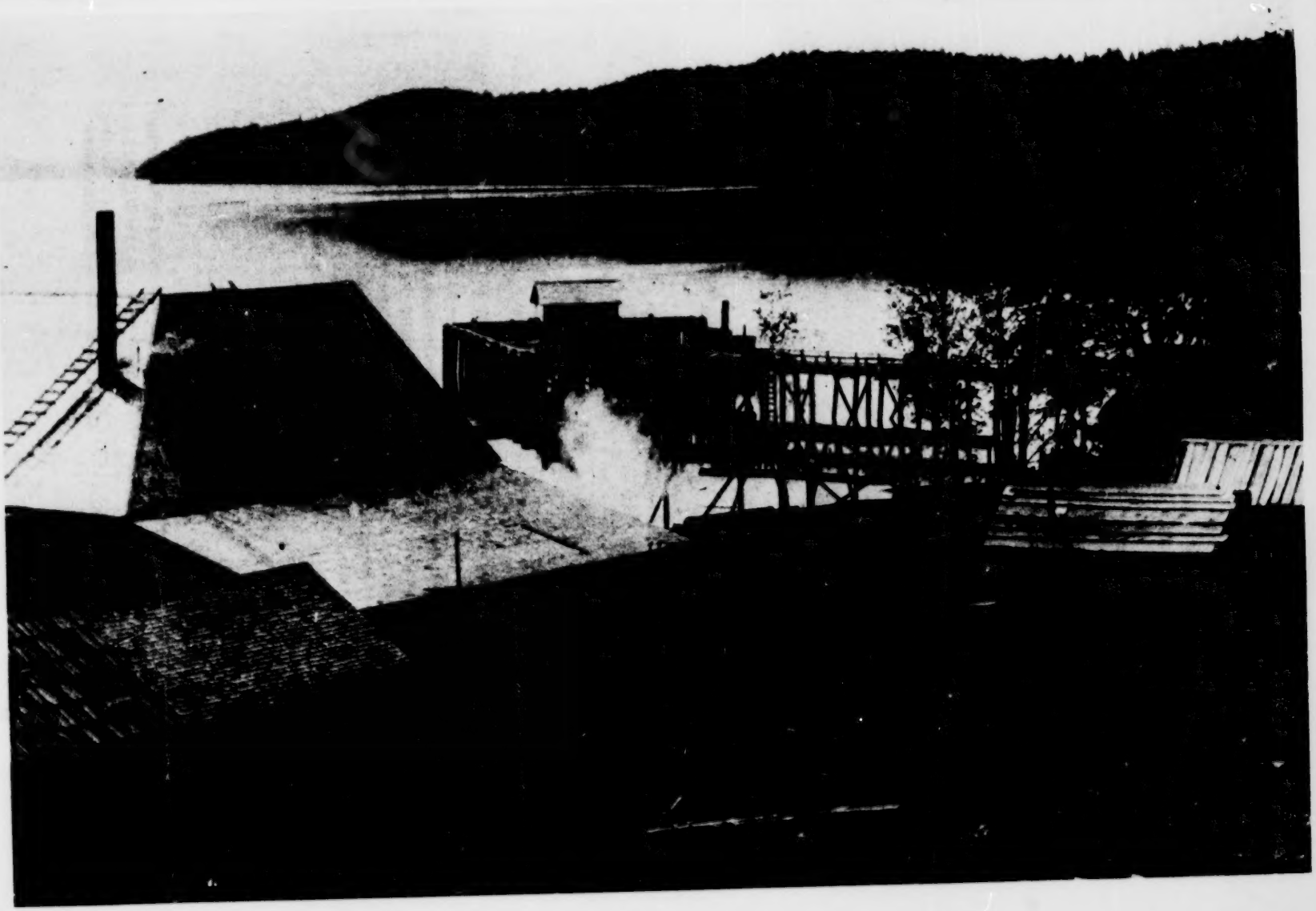
As the work progressed and Kurikka realized the big mistake made in the estimate of the cost he urged the men to go on strike but no one would listen to him any more.

—ALII ANDERSON

$3,000 proved to be only a fraction of the final cost of the bridges. Thousands of feet of lumber and months of labour, in North Vancouver and on Malcolm Island, went for nothing.

This episode was followed by yet another controversy, this time about Kurikka's views on love and marriage, which he had expressed in articles in *Aika*. When the bridge builders returned to Sointula late in 1904, a special meeting was held to discuss the matter. Many people were concerned about the idea of "free love" seemingly implied in Kurikka's articles. Although there was

Opposite: Planing mill with tailor shop, lower left. Sointula, circa 1904.



no suggestion "free love" was practised in the colony, there were fears that outsiders would form a misleading impression from the articles. This, plus the bridge fiasco, seriously divided the colony on the issue of Kurikka's leadership, and Kurikka's old partner, Makela, was now part of the opposition.

AINO HALMINEN: Kurikka was a socialist to a certain extent, but he wasn't quite the man that Mr. Makela was. He figured that he was just a little bit above the others, to tell you the truth. Whereas Makela considered himself just an ordinary man, same as all the rest of the people there.

KAISA RIKSMAN: Makela was very educated. He had gone to university and knew something about law, and in every way he was—what would you say—a wise man.

ARVO TYNJALA: He was really the building force. Kurikka was more of a lecturer, a spokesman. There was quite a difference in their ideas, too.

The meeting resulted in Kurikka's resignation from the colony. Accompanied by nearly half of the colonists, he moved to Webster's Corners in the Fraser Valley, where they tried to form another utopia. Later he went back to Finland, but returned to the United States once more, and eventually died in New York in 1915. The remaining colonists tried to continue at Sointula, but were unable to overcome the problems caused by a lack of manpower and the burden of debt.

KAISA RIKSMAN: The actual cause was lack of money. There were two sawmills and all these homes, and they had two boats—large boats—and all this was mortgaged. And finally, when they got a good load of lumber which they sent to Vancouver, the mortgage company took this load which was supposed to be sold to bring in enough money for them to live on until they were able to make more lumber.

But since this load was taken away from them, there was just no money. Everyone had to go out on their own, that's all there was to it. They couldn't go on as a community any more, or as they had before. They went bankrupt.

The mortgage company would have sold all this equipment back to them for $10,000, but they didn't have enough business heads, or people knowledgable in business ways. They were disheartened too, by that time, some of them.

Proudly though we turned our backs to the capitalistic world we were nonetheless dependent upon it in every way. The first boatload of goods brought to the island was bought on credit. We were always in the same predicament: purchases had to be made first, payments dragged ever farther and farther behind.

—A. B. MAKELA, QUOTED IN JOHN I KOLEHMAINEN, "HARMONY ISLAND", *B.C. Historical Quarterly*

The final meeting of the 37 members of the colony took place on May 27, 1905. The company was liquidated and the colony property was sold. But a small group of people, Makela among them, did stay on at Sointula as independent families and individuals. The colony was dead, but there was life in the community yet.

Had we had as much wisdom and practical experience as we had sacrifice and vigour, we would have succeeded better.

—MATT HALMINEN, QUOTED IN J. DONALD WILSON, *B.C. Studies*

THREE COMMUNITIES

BELLA COOLA

The early death of Reverend Saugstad was a sad event for the colonists, but it did not seriously affect the future of the colony as a whole. Each colonist was primarily responsible for his or her own survival. The work this entailed was made lighter by the support provided by fellow colonists linked in a wide range of community activities and united by a common religion. The population of the colony continued to grow and with well over 200 people and an increasing number of children among them it wasn't long before a school was established. The first teacher was one of the original colonists, Iver Fougner.

MILO FOUGNER: My father was born in Lillehammer in central Norway. He decided above all he wanted to go to sea. So when he was 15 he signed on the four-masted barque called the *Cadalia* and sailed down to South Africa, India, and the West Indies. Then he decided he was going to go to America. My dad went to Minnesota and of all things—something we can never understand—he took up teaching. He went to a normal school and he'd taken English in Norway so he could get along, although he used to tell a lot of funny stories about newcomers when they came out and their lack of language.

When they decided they needed a school they pounced on him immediately. He came down to the old Vancouver High School and brushed up a bit there, and went back and started the first school at Bella Coola, in a tent. He had a big spruce block as a desk and the kids sat on cedar blocks with their slates.

In 1901 he came down and got his teacher's certificate in Vancouver. He was one of the first [the first] I think to get them in the old [Vancouver] Normal School. He went back and taught intermittently, then for a few years, and then [1909] he had a chance to apply for the Indian Agent's position and he got it.

Above: First child born in Norwegian colony, surrounded by males. Hagensborg, about 1900.

I was born in what was called the Nusatsum district in those days in Bella Coola, under rather trying circumstances as I've heard since—rivers were in flood, the doctor couldn't get there, he almost drowned his horse getting there, fording rivers.

I think what I remember most of all as a lad is land-clearing and fires going, and logs being made for houses and shakes being split for roofs and that sort of thing.

I remember my first trip to what we called a sawmill in those days. It was a waterpowered affair and I was absolutely amazed at everything. It was set in a little gorge I suppose you would call it, a waterfall behind, and the arrangement was very simple. There was a wooden flume built into the waterfall itself and this in turn came down through, oh, I suppose you could be generous and call it a penstock. It was just a square wooden affair with a Pelton wheel at the bottom, and this drove the mill. It also drove the log haul that hauled them in.

In fact, there was a time of year that was called "sagvann"—I don't know if I can translate it from Norwegian—"saw water" I suppose, you could call it. You didn't expect any of those people that owned the sawmills to be home at that time. Everything stopped for the height of water. The time of the year was in early spring, and they'd say, "Yes, there's sawmill water now." It was a definite height of water that lasted a certain time and after that there wasn't enough to keep the flume full.

My grandfather's brother, H. O. Hansen, was a huge powerful man. The headrig, as we call it now in a sawmill, was a simple carriage that was hauled by water power as well, and I remember those huge hands of his on a peavey banging these logs down on the carriage and fairly pushing them through by bull strength. It just looked as though he was right in there pushing them through himself. That's my first recollection of industry, period.

The men who owned it had farms of their own. And until the day came when they had sons of their own to take over the farm, well, the women of course, as usual, operated the farms. In many cases, in a poor fishing year, the women probably made more of what they realized in the garden than the men did.

ANNIE LEVELTON: It was hard on a lot of them, but when all is said and done, nobody suffered from hunger. And I'd like to pay a tribute to Mr. Clayton. He owned the store. If it hadn't been for him none of the settlers could have possibly existed.

TED LEVELTON: John Clayton had been here a long time before we came here. Just what year he came here I don't know. He owned this whole waterfront right down to high water mark. And he didn't feel like letting go of any of this, you see. In fact he more or less objected to these colonists coming in here because it interfered to some extent with his business with the Indians. Immediately it [the colony] got started here one of two other fellows opened a store—a family by the name of [B.] Brynildson—they opened a store up here. Then there was a fellow up at Hagensborg who opened a store, and naturally this took away a certain amount of trade from Clayton.

I'll say this for the Clayton family, they treated us like we belonged to the family. I was fortunate they had two boys just about my age and I used to come down here a great many times by myself when I was only eight years old, because in my neighbourhood there wasn't another boy. There were eight or ten girls but no boys for six miles. We had a good time down here.

MILO FOUGNER: The church is somehow sort of a centre in my memory as a child. Whether it was the long session you had here on Sunday morning, when you went

there at 9:30 or 10 o'clock to Sunday school and waited for your parents at 11 and then went into service and came out at 1. The only thing being that after you came out of school, your mother usually bought you a couple of cookies to munch before service started.

In the Lutheran church we took the catechism and Bible history and the only diverting thing about Sunday school was the paper that we got. This was printed in Minneapolis. It was printed in Norwegian for children, but outside of that it was straight catechism and Bible history. An uncle of mine, who was a minister in the Lutheran Church, had translated the Bible history and the catechism into English and we were getting some of the first copies of these.

The service itself was something entirely different. It was Free Church Lutheran and my grandfather couldn't stand to see a minister with a clerical collar. They didn't take kindly to any ritual. They had a form of service but it was supposed to be from the heart, you understand. So that when you went in, once you were in the church itself, you could hear a pin drop. And five or six deacons were sitting in the front row, and the altar was set back from the main body of the church. And there was a U-shaped rail, and I remember this was a wonderful thing. The kneeling bench and the top of the rail were covered with red velvet, beautiful red velvet, and it had brass fasteners all the way around.

My grandfather was one of them, Uncle Hansen as I called him. All the oldtimers were deacons in the church and they sat there. One of them would probably read the lesson, and another one would make one of the prayers and another one another prayer, and that was entirely unrehearsed and unread. These were long interminable prayers about everything that would have happened during the week. But the slightest noise in that church, the slightest rustle, and they would turn as one. I remember that! That just struck fear into me, when they would turn. The minister was a kindly, old fellow, very kindly, very dry as I remember.

There was always one hymn, a great long hymn for that day, designed for that particular church day and it was broken up into the different verses. The man who led the choir in those days, Erick Nordschow, was a musician of some note, and his four daughters sang in a quartet.

When they opened the big church at Hagensborg, there was a big do. Oh, the whole colony, everybody was there and there was a big sort of dinner. A few speeches were made by some of the more prominent men, especially the church elders. Unfortunately, Reverend Saugstad never had a chance to see the church. He died, and there was a man by the name of Sauge, Hans Sauge. He was from Minnesota, and he came out here. And he was here for many, many years. He was a minister.

There was no doctor, of course, in those early days. There wasn't a registered nurse there, but this Mrs. Oveson was a peculiar combination of a Florence Nightingale, I would say, perhaps and in other ways almost sadistic. She made it her business to take care of every ailment there was in the place. She had a little box of needles and her linen thread, and if you got a cut she would come and sew it up right bang on the spot. She delivered babies, and she laid out the dead, and decorated the church in her peculiar way. But she seemed to enjoy funerals, I think, more than anything else, and that's my memory of her: in front of the old Lutheran church making sure that before the pallbearers came in she had bagfuls of short cedar boughs that she had clipped off, and these must be strewed from the gate, in through to the church, up the aisle of the church to where the casket was to lie in state.

She was an intensely religious, fine Christian woman. She made a wonderful contribution in those early days. There is no doubt about it that she saved many a life.

ANNIE LEVELTON: Mother nursed us. She was a perfect doctor. She and Mrs. Oveson. If anyone was hurt, so bad that you had a cut that had to be sewn, she sewed it up. She fixed them up. Well, my brother fell on one of the axes, one of the double-bladed axes. My mother had to nurse him through that, he had to lie on his stomach for about two weeks.

And anyone who had a cut, my mother fixed it up and the only medicine she had was camphorated oil and Friar's Balsam. No doctors, no nurses, no anything.

MILO FOUGNER: I remember Indian remedies they used. For instance, if you put a fish hook in your hand or slashed your hand with a fish hook, there was a particular kind of grass they used to take, that has a very rough edge on it, and they would put that in the cut and of course, the cut wouldn't heal while it was there; it would drain. And then in a day or so they'd pull it out and that was it, no more trouble.

Harlan Smith wrote a *Materia Medica* [*Materia Medica of the Bella Coola and Neighbouring Tribes of British Columbia*] of the Bella Coola Indians. I knew a lot of these things before he ever wrote it but it's interesting to see it in print. For instance, foxglove, from which they obtain digitalis, was used by the Bella Coolas' for the symptoms of heart trouble. Many of the herbs that they used that are identical to herbs that are used by herbalists in England.

The assistance of the Bella Coola Indians was a feature of the settlers' arrival at Bella Coola. There was much more and much closer contact between

John Widsten with unknown child ("probably a Svisdahl"). (Iver Fougner photo; PABC 95380).

the Norwegians and Indians than there was between settlers and Kwakiutl people at Cape Scott and Sointula. As well, groups of semi-nomadic Chilcotin Indians came down into the Bella Coola valley each summer from the high country around Anahim Lake, about 60 or 70 miles to the east.

MILO FOUGNER: The Indian people, they were a very important factor in the life of the colony. I think perhaps that both sides discovered integration and segregation wasn't so important per se as mutual trust—mutual admiration if you like—for one another's good points and mutual understanding. When I was a boy, you respected the Indian people to the point where you would never intrude on one of their affairs unless you were asked, unless you were invited and you considered it an honour if you were. By the same token our affairs were the same. Now, integration says that these barriers should all be cut down, but I'm not prepared to agree that the situation is any better now than it was when I was a boy. In fact, I feel that there was more respect possibly between us in those days than there is now.

TED LEVELTON: For a monetary consideration, naturally, they were always willing to take your freight up [river]. They hauled freight all the way to Hagensborg in canoes. These fellows that lived a way up there, say half a dozen of them, would sort of club together and come down and buy maybe a ton and a half of provisions—the heavy stuff like flour, sugar, and this kind of stuff. And they'd get the Indians and they'd take it up for five dollars. Two men would take that canoe all the way to Hagensborg and unload the stuff there and then come home again, which saved those fellows a tremendous lot of hard, backbreaking work. They'd pole it. Two or three men can take one of those spoon canoes up places that you would swear that nothing but a very powerful motor could drive a vessel up through.

MILO FOUGNER: We grew up with the Indian kids, of course, and could speak with them and I suppose we heard more of the imagery of the different dances and what it meant and that sort of thing, and knew the different costumes.

When my dad was Indian Agent he had a field matron at Kitimat send in her annual requisition for drugs and amongst it was a barrel of Epsom Salts, which is 100 pounds of Epsom Salts. So my dad wrote to her and he said he'd received her requisition and passed it on, but he said, "What are you going to do with 100 pounds of Epsom Salts, move the village?"

ANNIE LEVELTON: The Indians were surprisingly very good to us. They could have resented us pretty badly but they were awfully good to us. And we were good to them. The settlers, I will say this, were fine men and never once did we ever hear of any scandal with them, bachelors and all. They never went near the village. They were polite to the Indians and the Indians were polite to them, and they understood each other.

You'd go down to the wharf and hear one fellow say, "How many fish did you catch?" and he'd be speaking Norsky. "I got so many fish" and the other fellow would say something in Chinook, and that was fine.

Although the scenery and climate of the valley may have reminded settlers of parts of Norway, one element of the natural life of the area was new to nearly all of them—the grizzly bear.

ANNIE LEVELTON: I saw a bear and never even knew it was a bear when I was a little girl. I didn't know that it was a bear until I saw a picture of one in later years. I thought it was a big dog I'd seen.

Mr. Bakken arrived one morning down at the cabin and he was laughing, he was nearly in hysterics. And mother said, "What in the world is so funny?" "Well," he said, "I did a funnier thing today than I ever did in my life," he said. He was coming from his home—he lived about four miles up the line, I guess—and he had to cross what we call the Snootli bridge and as he came along on this side down the hill, a big grizzly meandered right out on the road right ahead of him.

The grizzly was so close to him that he didn't really know what it was at first I guess, and the grizzly just stopped and looked at him. And he just couldn't think of a thing to say, so he tipped his hat and said, "Good morning!"

TED LEVELTON: A very close friend of ours, Karls Christopherson, he was a bachelor but he used to stay at our place a lot and he was very comical sort of guy. He was a great man with kids. He would tell us some of the most hair-raising yarns. I'm sure that none of them were true, but boy, he had us spellbound. We'd just sit there with our ears strained right out to make sure we didn't miss anything when he started telling some of these yarns.

He, with several other guys had been up to what is known as the Salloomt Valley, which runs off the main valley here about 12 miles up. And they'd been prospecting in there and found a very likely looking prospect. And they had this analyzed and it analyzed very well and they decided to develop this thing.

Anyway, this one Christopherson, with several other guys, had been up there doing some work. They built a cabin and made a pretty good road in there. And he was coming out again with a big pack of blankets and personal clothing and he had a frying pan in one hand and a kettle in the other. And he was walking along the trail—this was in early summer—and all of a sudden a big old grizzly pops right out of the bush, right out in front of him, got up on her hind legs and started roaring and coming towards him. Well, here he was with his big pack on his back and he couldn't get rid of that in a hurry and he figured it was no use running, so he thought the only way is to go right at her and see if he could bluff her out. So he started beating this frying pan and his kettle together and kept walking towards her. And he finally bluffed her! She started backing off and she backed off and backed off, and she finally got up and beat it. And he said he could feel the cold sweat running down the back of his neck all the time he was doing this. But he said, when he finally realized what he was doing the kettle was absolutely flat and the frying pan was all dented up but he said, "I think it saved my life. I fully expected that old girl would have gone for me because she had a couple of cubs there."

Physical strength is not an absolutely essential attribute of all pioneers, but it was certainly a useful one in the early days of the colony, and there were many strong men in the valley. Almost certainly the strongest of them all was Ole Saugstad, the nephew of Reverend Saugstad.

ANNIE LEVELTON: Oh, Ole Saugstad, he was a big, tall man with great big whiskers. He was a fine-looking man, with rather a face of a . . . well, I'd say he had the face of a saint.

TED LEVELTON: Tremendous shoulders on him. I don't know what size coat he'd wear but I'd say it was a 46 or 48 coat, because the width of his shoulders, man, it was like looking at a barn when you looked at him. I would say that Ole weighed 225 or 230 pounds and no fat on him. He was solid bone and muscle.

They tell of when they were building a bridge up here on the Nusatsum River. They put in nine spans across this river; they were 60 feet long, each span, and they were all what they call a "king truss." These truss timbers were 12 × 14's and about 40 some-odd feet long. Well, you take a green fir timber, 12 × 14, and you try to lift the end of that, and I'm telling you, you've got to have strength. Five or six of these fellows were trying to lift this timber up onto a scaffolding to get it on top of a pier that they had built, and they were all heaving and tugging and they weren't able to make it. He was standing sort of watching this. He was a bit of a pompous sort of a guy, this fellow. He liked to have people notice when he did something a little out of the ordinary.

There was a man by the name of Hansen who was the foreman on the job, and he was a big man, but four or five of those fellows couldn't put that timber up onto the staging, so he [Ole] went over and he said: "Mr. Hansen, where would you like this timber put?" "Well," Hansen said, "I want to get it on top of that staging so I can get it up onto the pier." Well, he goes over, and he said, "All right, boys," he said, "just step out of the way, will you please?" He pulls his trousers up and does his belt up a little bit and he rolls his shirt sleeves up and bends down and sets his hands under this thing and he hoists this old timber up and laid her up. Sort of dusted his hands off when he done this, and the rest of the guys just stood there with their chins hanging right down on their chests.

He always used to say, "Oh, the Reverend Saugstad," he said, "actually he has no right to that name, that is my name." In the old country they used to take the name of the place, and Saugstad would mean, if you translated literally, a sheep wold, or something, sheep hill. So he said, "That's my people's name," he said. "This Reverend Saugstad, he has no right to that name, but oh, we won't go and quibble about that."

He was a very fine man, mind you. Upright, honest. Everybody thought a lot of Ole.

Despite the hard work and hardship involved in getting established in the valley—or perhaps because of them—the colonists did find time to enjoy themselves.

MILO FOUGNER: I remember the Annual Meetings, I suppose mostly because there was a tremendous amount of good food there, at that time, you know, for a small boy.

The programs were interminable. There was a brass band in attendance, there was a choir in attendance, there was a quartet in attendance and there were at least five speakers; and when I say speaker I mean it. Each one of them would probably take an hour. And this started at 10 in the morning and went on and on and on and on. You stopped for a huge meal at noon and then it would go on until the afternoon some time and then they'd have afternoon coffee and then there'd be someone else ready to make a speech.

BERTHA NYGAARD: We had dances once a week in the winter, because the men were mostly away in the summertime. We danced till morning, till three o'clock in the morning. There was a lot of snow in those days, and we went in a cutter. My husband used to load up a whole sleigh-load of young people. We'd gather them up as we went up the valley.

My husband was very musical. At the dances, my husband hardly got a chance to dance with me at all because he had to play all the time in the orchestra. He played the flute.

Iver Nygaard with team of horses (Kate and Trilby). Left to right: Victor Schulstad, J. Sylvester, Hjolmar Gaarden, Andrew Svisdahl.

RUTH GURR: My dad had a baritone and a cornet he'd play that triple-tongued "Carnival of Venice," "Flight of the Bumblebee" and all those fancy hard pieces. And Martin played the cornet and the flute. And Georgia played the organ and everybody played something.

MILO FOUGNER: One chap recited beautifully. I can see him sway yet, the motions he went through. I remember even some of the lines here and there. They don't mean anything to me now because they are entirely separated from what the poem was about, but mostly his gestures and wonderful recitation.

They would be takeoffs on the history of early Norway written by this Snorri Sturluson. I remember we had copies of it. I read it avidly as a boy—the pre-Christian history of Norway—and that sort of thing.

TED LEVELTON: At Christmas they'd have candies and some nuts and an apple, which was something we didn't see every day in those days. There'd probably be a big roast of pork or for the one who was a little more prosperous, even a turkey. But they had to be brought in and with the boat being so uncertain you could never be sure that you'd get it here in eatable condition. It might be on the boat for two weeks, and there was no cold storage in those days on the ship. They were just hung up in the fore part, the peak of the boat somewhere away from the boilers as far as possible, but you know the heat, those turkeys were ready to walk again by the time they got here.

Once land was cleared and farms established, the valley itself was very productive.

RUTH GURR: We had a large farm. We used to put up twenty tons of potatoes and tons of carrots and turnips. I milked two cows and my brother Lloyd milked two cows also. We all had names for them and they were our pet calves when they were younger. We used to pinch their tails to make them jump up to the barn and we even put saddles on them and rode them. But then our mum got after us for putting the saddle on because she said that's too hard on the back.

The valley was a good place for growing fruit. I think they brought some trees from Norway, the hardy trees, and I haven't tasted any apples since like it. They had one that tasted like banana, and there was one tree called Georgia's tree and it had a different flavour from any apple I've tasted since, too. We had the Wolf River, the Wealthy, Gravensteins, the best Bella Coola Gravensteins. I don't think any Gravensteins in the world could taste like the Bella Coola ones. Another apple was the Golden Russet. They were the good keepers that we kept over winter. They were as hard as rock, and oh, just so tasty.

Mum used to make apple jelly and apple sauce. She'd can in two-quart jars and we'd just have so much canned stuff; blackberries, raspberries, cherries, plums, rhubarb, all the vegetables, jams of all descriptions, pickles. Then she'd just be continually baking. I can remember coming home from swimming on a hot summer day, just sweltering, and she'd have that cookstove on making cinnamon buns and bread. And oh, we were hungry after swimming and we'd just dive in.

Our mornings were usually spent doing chores, when we weren't going to school. In the summer holidays, my mum would say we'd have to pick blackberries before we could go swimming. My parents would sell blackberries to the fishermen down at the cannery so we'd get that done first. Then she baked bread. Twelve loaves of bread every second day, I think it was. We had 13 in the family and then when the haying crew was there, oh, I don't know how many men worked on the haying. In the summer, she'd bake a lot of bread.

There was just continual chores and we used to ride with my dad on the stone boat, picking up stones off the field after the ploughing and discing. And after blowing stumps there'd be roots and rocks, and burning at night. We had to do haying in the summer—shucking the hay and putting it onto the load. I was the trigger man at the barn.

My dad farmed and did roadbuilding work. They were hired, so much for the team, and then so much for each man. I think at that time they made $5 a day for being a road foreman. He'd get up real early in the morning and they'd light the coal oil lamp, and I can remember plain as day, that coal oil lamp burning and my mum preparing breakfast when it was pitch black outside.

When the Conservatives were in, my dad was the road foreman, but when the Liberals were in, Albert Hammer became foreman. It just depended on politics.

They had to do river work a lot of the time, too. If there was ever a logjam or any scary work had to be done they'd always get my dad to do it. They had to go out in boats, and fool around by the logjams and put dynamite down in there and blow them out.

Work on the roads and on the river was more than just a matter of maintenance. It was made necessary by a persistent problem in the valley—floods. On several occasions these annual floods washed out the road that joined the settlements of Bella Coola and Hagensborg. Not until the 1920s was an adequate road developed.

ANNIE ENGEBRETSON: One winter, before Christmas, we woke up one night about 12 o'clock—there was two feet of water in our house. It was a flood. So Dad went out and turned the cow and horse out, but the calf had drowned. Morton and Iver Vestmor had a house built on top of the hill, so we got up there and stayed there and dried out again. We lost all our food because the water came up so high.

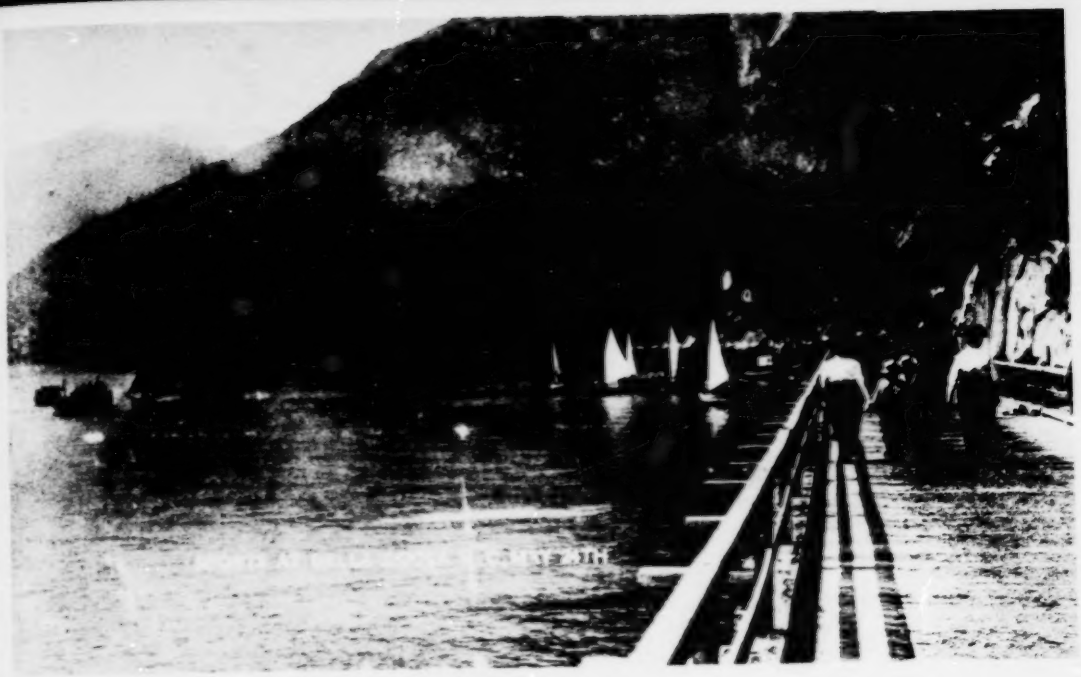
TED LEVELTON: About 1917 the Necleetsconnay River went on a real rampage one fall. Tremendous high water. I think there was a slide or something in the river and all of this stuff was horsed out through the canyon—boulders that weigh two or three hundred pounds—and they came down that river by the thousands of tons and she filled the riverbed to the point that the river just ran right over the banks. Unfortunately the ground sloped towards the townsite. And with the roads, that was a natural outlet for the water; she just started horsing down through these roads and the consequence was she gutted the roads. There were holes in them you could have thrown this house into, just terrific holes.

The Honourable T. D. Pattullo was then Minister of Lands, and he was also the member for the district. I happened to be at that time the Secretary of the Liberal Association, and I would write to Pattullo and tell him what was going on here. Finally, one year he said, "I'm going to come up and have a look at the situation up there." He came up to Ocean Falls by one of the CN boats, and then the Forestry boat, which was stationed at Ocean Falls, brought him in here. Very fortunately we had a humdinger of a flood the day he arrived. I happened to be sitting at the breakfast table looking through a window, which faced right down towards the dock, and I saw a short, stocky sort of chap wading up this road. And I said, "Well, some guy must have come in from the outside. There's nobody going down from this end because he'd have enough brains not to walk down through all that water." He got closer, and I says, "So help me, it's T. D. Pattullo. By golly he's got here just at the right time. Now we can really show him. We don't have to write any more letters and tell him how bad this was!"

So he came up to the verandah and I was out there to meet him and I said, "What do you think of this, T. D.? I was just going to sit down and write you another letter." "Well," he said, "you don't have to write me another letter. I've seen for myself now. Now I'm all wet anyway, we'll go up to the town. I want to see what the hospital is like. I want to see the doctor up there."

There were places where the road was still dry, but in the dips there was water up to our waists. We finally got abreast of the hospital, and unfortunately, the ground where the hospital was was lower than the road. As we started going out to the hospital, the doctor came out on the verandah. She was very hard of hearing, and he was trying to talk to her from about 75 feet back, and she couldn't hear. He said, "Well, I'll try and get a little closer." So I said, "You'd better wait." The water was fairly fast, so I went and got a hold of a good stick and I was prodding out in front and the next thing I was up here to my chest and I said, "That's far enough! I ain't going any farther. If you'd like to go any farther, here's the stick, you're welcome!" "No," he said, "I think that's far enough. I've seen enough!"

We went back to the hotel and now I said, "What do you think of it?" "Well," he said, "as far as I'm concerned, that road has to be changed. We can't be pouring money into this river, because we no sooner get one job done than she washes it all out again, and to put in a breakwater is going to cost an unlimited amount of money." "So," he said, "we'll have to look at the other side." "Well," I said, "we can't even get to that side right now. The road is up over your neck in



water between the village and the bridges." "Well," he said, "I'm going to stay for two or three days. I'll send the boat back and I'll go back on the steamer."

So he did, and as it happened, the weather turned cold and the water dropped very rapidly. And we came over here and I took him through some of the doggonedest jungles up through here—big cedar swamps and muck and mud right up to your ears. But he was game, boy, he went through! "Well, there's only one thing," he said, "We got to hit that mountain, that's the only thing we can do. There's no use going down the flat because that gets under this water when the river's up."

They decided that he would bring the surveyor in. That fall they sent the surveyor in, and they surveyed right from the dock here and laid out a road right along the waterfront and ran on up to join into the other road. In 1924, they sent contractors in here and they blasted this road all out the grade was put in.

Pattullo's visit did result in short-term action, but floods continued to be a serious problem for many years.

With determination, hard work and perseverance, the Norwegian colonists did succeed in building a community and their success soon attracted other settlers to the area. There are still many descendants of the colonists in a present population of 2,500 people, and if only a few old buildings remain from the early years, a prominent snow-capped peak, Mt. Saugstad, overlooks the valley, and Mt. Fougner, Clayton Falls, Thorsen and Nordschow creeks, serve as lasting reminders of the original colonists.

MILO FOUGNER: There was nothing there, outside of the Hudson's Bay post and the Indian village—no roads, no trails; they were dependent entirely on the river for navigation—and yet these women, from what I've heard since and from what I remember, were the reason they stayed. This Mrs. Hansen in particular, her husband was one of the first to get discouraged, and just after New Year's he said, "Well, we're going back to Minnesota." "No," she said, "I've seen the fall here

now in Bella Coola and part of the winter, and I want to see what the spring is like." So when the spring came, he said: "Well, now we can get back to Minnesota just in time to plant crops." "Well," she said, "I've seen the winter now, and the spring is so beautiful, I'd like to see the summer." And that was it. They stayed. They're both buried there.

These are the things I remember, the people particularly. So many of the older people, I realize now, were towers of strength—nothing fazed them.

CAPE SCOTT

By 1908, the Danish colony at Cape Scott no longer existed. Without steamer service, a safe harbour for small boats, or road links to the east coast of Vancouver Island, the colonists had moved to the San Josef Valley about 20 miles from the Cape, to the Holberg area, another ten miles or so to the southeast, or away from the area altogether.

Although there was still no road link from these places to the outside world, the San Josef Valley was fertile and productive. Holberg, at the head of the long and sheltered Holberg Inlet [originally West Arm], became a regular port of call for CPR steamers that operated on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

One family, the Rasmussens, moved to Sea Otter Cove, which was as isolated as the Cape Scott area, and one Danish family stayed on at the Cape. N. P. Jensen remained at Hansen Lagoon until his death in 1935, and Theo Fredericksen, who had married Jensen's daughter Johanne, was the very last of the colonists to leave the area many years later. However, as the Danes moved out, another wave of settlers were moving in.

. . . Speaking generally, the soil is a rich alluvial deposit, lying on hard-pan, with a depth of from 3 to 4 feet. This is in the valley; on the ridges and benches there is much gravel, but these gravels are also fertile, as has been proved. Everywhere the soil must be exposed to the sun, and vigorous tillage is necessary; then good crops of vegetables are assured. For example, last year John Laurie, at Sea Otter Cove, on the ocean side, cleared away the weeds, dug up his ground in small patches wherever he could get in his spade, covered it with sea-wrack—mostly kelp—dug it up again, and then planted potatoes and other garden-stuff. There was hardly an acre in all of it, but he sold to me $77 worth of vegetables for my camp; and still has left forty-two sacks of potatoes and a lot of cabbages and

Above: Troller and postmaster's buggy at Fisherman Bay.

turnips, for which he will probably get 2 cents a pound. Every settler can do the same, but unfortunately every settler has not at present means of reaching a market. . . . Three years ago the population of all of this country—namely, from Holberg to Cape Scott—was not much more than sixty; today there are nearly, if not quite, 300 pre-emptors living on their holdings. Some of these are married men with families, so it is a fair estimate to put the present population at 600; while the most of these are farmers, there are also carpenters, smiths, tailors, bakers, a watchmaker, a barber, and men of nearly all trades.

—H. H. Browne to G. H. Dawson,
***Sessional Papers*, 1913**

Clara Hersley: My grandfather [N. P. Jensen] came to Cape Scott first, then my father [Theo Fredericksen] afterwards. My grandfather came in with the first settlement. He farmed. He also, once, tried to put a dyke across the lagoon—Hansen's Lagoon there—all by himself. It was a big job because it was all done by hand or by the horse scraper. At Cape Scott father built boats and did some farming and general carpentry work.

For a while there he used to go down every summer to Beaver Cove and around for logging, to get a little bit of money. Of course, money was something we didn't need much of up there. We didn't ever go to the big city. Actually, us kids, we only spent it for Christmas presents; that's about all we spent money for.

Ellen Mellstrom: He kept up the part of the road from the post office to our place. My brothers worked on it too. If they didn't get any roadwork done they did it on their own, but sometimes the road foreman allowed them a few days of roadwork and they could work on the road and be paid a bit.

Our first house was near the very Cape at the end of the island. He had a quarter-section and later added another quarter-section. It was built mainly of cedar and stuff he'd cut from the bush. The outside siding was long strips of split cedar, and there were shakes on the roof. Then he had found some redwood on the beach that he'd made the window and door casings out of.

We grew most of what we ate. We had vegetables of all sorts like carrots, peas and beans, and potatoes of course, and beets and even squash and marrows and corn. We even grew a little corn.

There were clams and mussels on the beach. And my brothers and father went fishing. They had a fifteen foot boat and they went out for a few hours and fished with the jiggers. It was quite plentiful with cod. My grandfather lived on the [Fisherman] river he used to put out a little piece of net and catch salmon and he'd share them around.

Clara Hersley: Eleven cows was the most we ever had, I believe. We had all our own beef, of course, and a pig now and again, and all sort of wild stuff like deer, geese, and ducks. Oh, we had lots of meat and plants to eat always.

Supplies came up on the *Maquinna* or whatever steamboat came into Quatsino and then a fishboat would pick it up there—it was our cousin for many years—and bring it up to Cape Scott once a month. We always got enough to last half a year. We often did get bad weather, of course.

The thing that involved most people was haying. They used to get together to build houses, too. We were always cooperating one way or the other. We didn't have that much equipment. The only thing we had really, was a horse-drawn mower. Dad made our rakes out of wood and we did our raking by hand.

The women worked alongside the men in some things, like at haying time. When we got good weather somebody cut the hay with a mower, then we all pitched in to help get it cured in the barn. Sometimes we got fog in between so it took a while.

When we made hay on the meadows in the lagoon, why, once in a while, the tides would be in too high and they'd come up under the haystacks so it'd take more drying. In the years we were making hay there, the sluice in the dyke had gone out, that's why the water came up under the haystacks once in a while.

We all helped one another until it got done, because, of course, time was imperative. We never knew just how long the weather would hold so we all helped when there was haymaking.

From 1908 to 1914 there was a steady flow of new settlers into the northern end of Vancouver Island. Although many of them left again after only a short period of time in the area, by 1913 there were nearly 500 people in the San Josef Valley, where almost every quarter-section had been taken up.

Eva Peterson was a niece of Henry Ohlsen, one of the first Danish settlers in the San Josef Valley, and she came to the area as a teenager.

EVA PETERSON: When we first went up, my father and mother and the three sisters, we took a year off in 1909 and '10 and that was when we got acquainted with the first settlers in Cape Scott. And we felt richer for having known them.

The steamer used to go up to Holberg in those days, and we had taken all our goods and chattels with us, even a big piano. When we were halfway up the West Arm, they asked my father, "Where are you getting off, Mr. Buol?" "Oh, we're getting off at Holberg." "Well, how are you going to get your goods across from Holberg to San Josef Bay? There's only a foot trail." Anyway, this man said, "Well, I have an extra cabin here, and if you'd like to store your goods there and go to Holberg and walk the trail, that would be your only solution." So we unloaded our goods into small boats and came ashore and them into this cabin. And we stayed there just a short while.

And these young folks who had let us use the cabin asked if my younger sister could stay with them—she was 12 then, I believe—and she could go and put a fire on and keep the piano dry, and then we could get up to San Josef Bay by way of a gas boat.

So my uncle from San Josef Bay and the boat that carried the mail and supplies for him came all the way up the West Arm and picked us up. And my father and mother, and the two girls of us, we were packed in there like sardines in the back of this boat. I think it was about a 27 foot boat, loaded with freight and mail and supplies. That's the way we made the journey down the West Arm, through Quatsino, around the lighthouse and from Quatsino up it's a seven-hour journey. So, once we were unloaded up there we weren't anxious to make a return trip.

My mother and father went down with this Mr. [Henry] Peterson who carried the mail. I stayed. My uncle was caretaker at the cannery and I looked after the post office that summer while he was over at the cannery.

The neighbours just across the river from the store had moved to town. They had given up the ghost and moved away but left a big patch of strawberries. So, one afternoon, I went in the boat with my uncle and we had boxes to fill and he said, "You pick the strawberries and I'll pick you up this evening."

Evening came and I'd filled my milk boxes, whatever it was I had to fill with big, luscious strawberries. I was tired, I was hungry and I sat down and waited for him to come and pick me up. And nothing happened. It started to get dark and the tide was coming in and I thought if the river fills it'd be almost half a mile wide when it was full and I thought "I'll never swim that," and I started to wade across.

I hit quicksand. Fortunately, there wasn't enough water to really float me properly, but I hit a boulder. I felt it with my bare feet and I stood on that. And there I was swaying, and the water was almost to my shoulders before I could hear the oars in the locks and I heard my uncle coming down the river. And all he had to say was "Oh, I forgot you." There I was, I don't know what would have happened!

In the fall, I walked that 20 miles of trail from San Josef Bay to Holberg. I walked this trail with a woman—they were all moving down to Holberg then—and she had a packboard with a hundred pounds of flour and I don't know what she had on top of that, but we had to walk for miles where there would only be fallen logs. She was ahead of me—Mr. Nelson was ahead of her—and when she stepped from one log down to the next I went up in the air! But we went 20 miles that day and I was so tired.

The next morning I guess I looked a bit worried, and I saw some of the men putting their heads together and they said they were going to Coal Harbour that day and would I care for a ride down? They would drop me off at our place, and oh, I was just so happy to get on my way. I don't know how many hours we were. They rowed with two sets of oars in a skiff all the way down. My mother welcomed them and we kept them that night. Early the next morning my dad said, "Well, I guess you'll be wanting to get off to Coal Harbour." And they headed back to Holberg. They'd just made the trip to take me down, you know. But that just gives you an idea of the way people were up there. Just one big family, so I always said.

John Harestad, a Norwegian, married Johanna Rasmussen, a daughter of Carl Rasmussen who was one of the colonists at Cape Scott in 1897 and the first settler at Sea Otter Cove in 1909.

JOHN HARESTAD: I always had the idea that I'd like to go farming. The Cape Scott area was all surveyed and the government had surveyed quite a bit marked into quarter-sections. They had these books in the land office, and I went and they gave me them books to look at, and so, well, I looked at the different names and there was Sea Otter Cove. I thought that was a real nice name so I marked in my book; Sea Otter Cove another place to check on.

I went up there on the steamer *Tees*, CPR on the west coast of Vancouver Island and they took us to Holberg and then we walked across the trails and I went as far as San Josef first and I stayed around there.

Then I still figured Sea Otter Cove was the most interesting place around there, because it had a little harbour. You know how it is on the west coast: if you haven't got a harbour, you can't get to shore. So, that's where I settled and I took up, oh, I think it was about a mile from the beach. I took up, a quarter-section, and I had big plans. I started clearing land just by hand.

Other settlers were scattered through the area once occupied by the colonists at Cape Scott. They were of many different nationalities, but there were many Scandinavians amongst them, and regardless of nationality and language, they developed a sense of community that embraced the entire region from Holberg to Cape Scott.

LESTER PETERSON: My father [Emil] went in 1911 to become free of mining. He logged, and he fished. He went back to the United States to log, then he fished in Rivers Inlet. He had to be home for about half the year to prove up on his preemption, which he did. And he got a crown grant from King George the Fifth personally.

He was quite aware that the working man had no holiday except when he was not working. So a holiday was hard times often, or it was between work. So you got a little stake and you did what you wanted. He loved to prospect, for instance. He and some partners—the Spooner brothers—found some copper ore in the Goodspeed Valley which later on became a commercial venture, but not in their day. This was in their time off between fishing and logging.

He built his first cabin near Lake William out of one cedar log. He even made lattices for the windows and everything except the plaster and nails on the house was made from one cedar log. He was quite an expert with the draw knife. With a drawknife and plane he could make a very presentable board.

He thought for one thing that maybe he could make a go of farming at Hansen Lagoon, and there was a piece of land that he hoped to get. It wouldn't likely have succeeded anyway, but the Frederiksens were succeeding at that time. They were shipping butter out and raised cattle and shot cougars for bounty. And they trapped and they fished and so on.

When my parents first went the influx was on. In 1911 my father went. There was a tremendous community spirit. This had been true among the original Danish colonists and it was also true among those who came in later, who were from various parts of Europe and the British Isles. Even if there were language difficulties, they were always overcome in the building of community halls and the holding of dances and fairs and parties and Christmas parties and so on. And as long as that could possibly be maintained, it was.

Some of the 200 people who attended the Fall Fair at Cape Scott in 1914. The fair was annual; the first one was inaugurated by Charles Wadey, Sr.

Where three years ago there were less than a hundred settlers in the area comprised in my surveys in Rupert District, there must be nearly a thousand today. The Cape Scott Settlement alone can claim a population of about 200, of which more than half are women and children. Holberg at the head of Quatsino Sound, is the port of the district, steamers plying there from Victoria twice a month, and occasional calls are made at Fisherman Cove, on the northern coast, by steamers from Vancouver which make regular calls at Shushartie Bay, farther to the eastward. From Holberg a wagon-road has been built to the westward into the San Josef Settlement, close to San Josef Bay, and trails extend from this road one southward to Raft Cove, at the south of Township 40, while another connects to the north with Fisherman Cove, a trail leading from this at the south of Section 30, Township 42, to the Cape Scott Settlement.

—H. H. Browne to G. H. Dawson,
Sessional Papers, 1914

Eva Peterson: It was 1912 and '13 when I came back up to San Josef Bay. I preempted this land on the beach, and I don't know, we never thought of our life as a life of hardship. We just took things for granted and all enjoyed each other and enjoyed the life. I had a little cabin built down on my place and I just thought it was a palace! I had a waterfall just beside it.

They'd built this cabin among high spruce trees and every night when I'd go to bed I'd wonder who would find me in the morning because it was very stormy in those days—the wind blew straight from the west—and those trees used to creak. Anyway, one day I was sitting at my table looking at the beach and I saw a band of men coming down with axes and saws, and they had come down to fell the trees that were endangering my cabin. And I didn't even have coffee in the house to treat them to! Anyway, that was the life we had up there. You didn't expect anything for what we did.

John Harestad: Well, I have always liked people. I was good friends with all of them, especially Captain Peterson. And, then he got his wife over from Copenhagen and he got some of his daughters over, and they were real lively. One of these nice Copenhagen girls got married and had a wedding in the schoolhouse. And, of course, they invited me to the wedding. And I set off some awful blasts. You know, it was a kind of dynamite—just tie it to a stick, and you know you don't have to be far away, you can set off three or four sticks, five, six feet away from the house and it'll just shatter the windows. I set off four or five blasts of dynamite. That was when they were going to sit down to the festivities. Then I realized it was too much but you can't mend it, you know.

Quite a few windows were broken. And, so I came in and I had a good smile. The bride said, "Well, there he comes, look at him smiling." Well, Captain Peterson said, "That shall be all right. I shall pay for the windows." So, you see that was the way it went. I was a little bit too wild.

Phyllis Hill: First of all, my uncle Tom and Aunty Mary [Williams], left Wales and settled in Prince Rupert. Then they were in Vancouver for awhile and then they were hearing great things that would be happening at Cape Scott. It was supposed to be the gateway to Alaska, so they decided to move up there and he was lucky because he had a good wagon and two great big horses, which was sort of a must up there. So, in the meantime, we were receiving letters from this far off spot, to Wales, and suggesting why wouldn't we sell our business, which was the milk business in Wales, and come out. By now, my mother was getting very homesick

for her oldest sister, Mary. So, in due time, we sold everything but a few goods and chattels, and decided we would go to Cape Scott.

We arrived at Fisherman Bay, and that is something else. Because first of all you arrive at Shushartie Bay up on the Union Steamship which was the *Venture* and you had to get in this little gas boat run by the fellow who owned the boarding house at Shushartie Bay. His name was [Jepther J.] Skinner. And he would bring the goods and the mail to Fisherman Bay. This is the cove in which we landed, so in order to get on land we had to get out of the little gas boat and then into a large rowboat to shore. This was really something for people who were coming from a place like Wales.

My dad wrote this for some notes, he was going to give a little talk, I believe to the Welsh Society, and he calls it "The Life of Pioneering on Vancouver Island."

"Landed at Cape Scott 47 years ago with wife and two children. Very rough trip from Shushartie Bay to Nahwitti. Spent the night there. Two of the people got off and walked to Cape Scott. And we went the next day. Most of the people were Scandinavians.

Having been a Medallion in First Aid, the first case was a young man named Pollock. He went hunting. There were lots of geese around and he left the scout to look around and then a flock of geese came over in a hurry, rushed for his gun and it went off. He tried to get his partner, he walked a half mile and he fell. And his pal ran another mile to my place. We fixed him up and got the doctor from Alberni, in three days. The doctor said he couldn't do any better than we had done. Then he asks him, to have his arm off? And he said, "Oh, let me die." Then he died the next morning.

CLARA HERSLEY: My dad and mother went to Vancouver one year, I don't know what year, and they brought this organ back home with them. My brother Hans learned mainly. Lars could play a little bit, but not much. My dad taught them. My father was musical. He played the violin. We used to gather round it quite often and have a sing-song. When we had a dance at the Community Hall, everybody went, the kids and all. The kids were just tucked away when they got tired and the old folks, they kept dancing until it was daylight.

There was a great, big Norwegian that played the accordian pretty good. He played at dances a lot of the time.

PHYLLIS HILL: First of all, it was very lovely to have these men who could play the fiddle, and one who played very well was the missionary's son, whose name was Fred and he was a very good fiddler. And most of the dances were Danish. It was just lovely because they taught all the kids. All of us would go, and we would learn the dances and we would stay up as long as we dared or until we got too tired. Then they'd put us on the large, long tables, to sleep. Usually I wasn't one that wanted too much sleep. I was having fun dancing—trying these Danish dances, and listening to the fiddle playing.

ELLEN MELLSTROM: When I was bigger—in my early teens—they used to have some dances about 20 miles from Cape Scott. My brothers and sisters and I, we'd go once in a while to one of those dances and we'd walk there in one day. Then we'd dance, and usually someone would invite us to stay over, an we'd stay over and have a sleep before we went home.

EVA PETERSON: Danish music mostly, or Scandinavian music, I should say, because then in San Josef Bay we had quite a mixture of Norwegians and Swedes and Danes. And they danced these old time dances.

Hans Frederiksen, mid 1930s.

NANCY HANSEN: Polkas and waltzes and all the ordinary little schottisches and folk dances, you know.

JOHN HARESTAD: I played for the dances. They were pretty lively, because I can tell you, when I was collecting fish with the boat in Rivers Inlet, at the weekends when the fishermen would come in, I know a couple of times my boat would be tied there along the float where the fishermen were mending their nets and so, I get out the accordian and sit out on the deck of my boat and start playing. And do you know, they stopped mending nets and they danced on the floats. They said, "There's nobody can sit still when you start playing them tunes."

JOHANNA HARESTAD: In the meantime, you had acquired a wife, too.

JOHN HARESTAD: Oh yes, yes.

JOHANNA: And then you got some kids.

JOHN: Yes. I don't know, the wife I think was the one who proposed to me.

JOHANNA: Come off it!

JOHN: I don't think it was me as much, but I had a great big mackinaw coat and I had boots that laced up, and she used to think that that was the best darn thing she'd ever seen!

JOHANNA: Well, they were good boots, nice coat, too. I guess there was a man inside of them.

EVA PETERSON: After I married we lived on the beach at San Josef Bay. One time we were sitting there and the ravens, the mink and the seagulls were all flying around something and my husband said, "Well, there's something odd on the beach today. It looks like a piece of blubber." So I said, "Well, I'll run down and see." I was young in those days. And I'd never seen anything like it in my life. It was a sort of bluey-grey, no sharp edges on it, and the ravens wouldn't touch it, none of the birds would touch it, and the mink walked over and ran away. Anyway, I beckoned to my

husband and he came down and we took it up. And we tried in every way to dispose of this. We burned it under logs, you know, when clearing land. I chipped off a little piece and put it in the kitchen window and every time I passed that window I thought "That's a sweet scent, you know."

Unbeknownst to my husband I'd sent a piece down to Victoria. They all had mineral claims up there and he used to go away for a month or six weeks at a time and leave me on the beach alone to develop these claims. So I sent this down to Victoria and I got my letter back. Ambergris! There we had disposed of more than a hundred pounds of it, thirty dollars an ounce. That was ignorance!

ELLEN MELLSTROM: We went along the beaches, especially after storms to see what we could find. There was no telling what we'd find. One time there was a whole bunch of oranges. Somebody must have lost crates of them. We picked them up, and most of them were good to eat, but we had so many we even fed some of them to the calves.

CLARA HERSLEY: When we walked in to get our mail, when we came back we could often see cougar tracks where they'd been following us, but it didn't bother us at all. There was one time that I walked to get the mail, and I had the dog along, and she got a cougar out of the bush and it ran right towards me. I had to do a bit of Indian dancing to make it change direction.

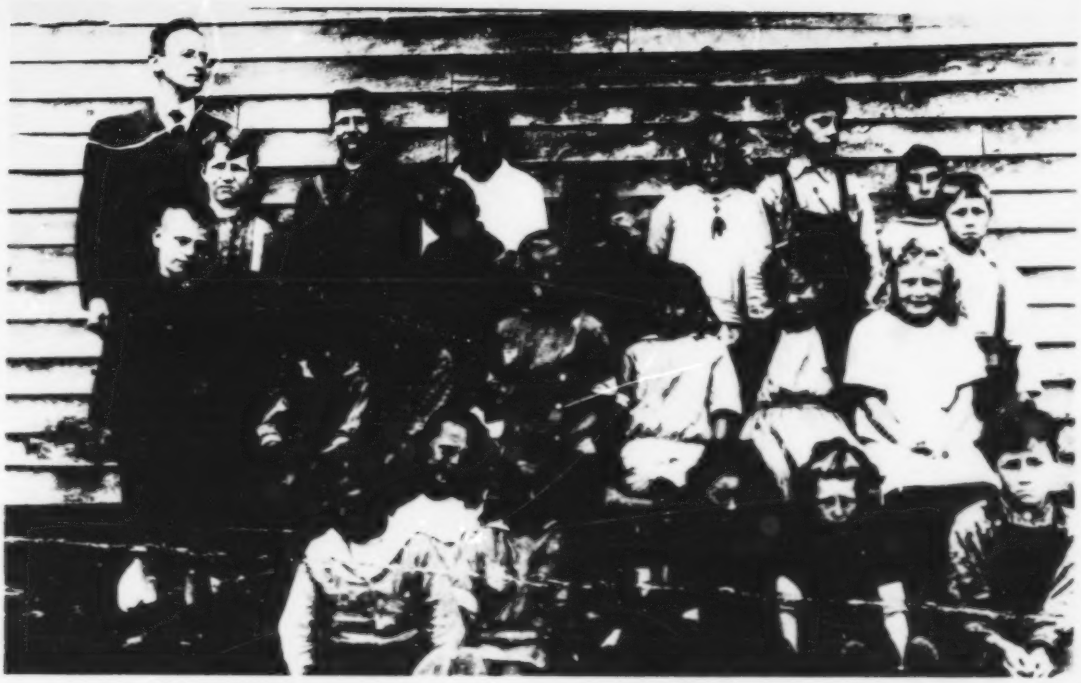
PHYLLIS HILL: To this day, I can still hear them crying in my mind, the cougars, oh, my goodness, yes. In the night. During the night. A very eerie, scary sound, I can tell you.

ELLEN MELLSTROM: Where we lived there was a sand neck that went right across the island so everytime a cougar came to our part of the island he had to go across that sand. My dad would go out there and look and see if there were any tracks. If there were any tracks they were pretty sure of getting the cougar. They got about 80 cougars altogether over the years and a lot of them were worth $40. In those days that was a lot of money.

PHYLLIS HILL: The day that the mail arrived at Fisherman Cove was a real "red-letter" day for everybody. Usually, I'd go straight from school because the road I turned down to get the mail was halfway home. I was always wondering if a bear or cougar would be crawling behind me and I was forever turning and twisting my neck but I would make it, somehow—safely.

In the northern portion of this district the Government has constructed about seven miles of wagon-road connecting Fisherman Bay and Cape Scott. Of later years, it has been the policy to use the appropriation to build 4-foot trails as they are required. Such a trail connects Fisherman Bay and Cache Creek and Shushartie Bay; another connects the road at Fisherman Bay with San Josef and Holberg. At Fisherman Bay there are two stores, post-office, and a stopping-place; there are also post-offices at Cape Scott, Sea Otter Cove, and San Josef. All of these are connected by the Dominion Government Telegraph, which touches nearly every settlement on the island, and is being constructed to Cache Creek and Shushartie Bay at present. At the mouth of Cache Creek is a store and post-office (Strandby). Agriculture forms the only occupation of the people in this part of the district.

—L. S. COKELY TO G. H. DAWSON,
***Sessional Papers*, 1917**



Cape Scott School, 1916–1917. The teacher is Percy Pullinger; his daughter is the blonde on the far right, centre row. First row, left to right: — and Clara Fredericksen, Dorothy Gibbs, Miriam Williams, Gertie King, Phyllis Williams, — Payne.

PHYLLIS HILL: The school came first before the church. . . . In my life, the school. Mr. [Percy] Pullinger was the teacher at the time and luckily for us he brought his pretty little blonde daughter so that added another person. The Pullingers' lived in [Carl B.] Christensen's house. That is where the two main roads joined. In that yard, much to our delight, were lovely apples and it was the loveliest thing for him to do for us was to bring us Yellow Transparent apples from his garden. They were a treat because there were so few apple trees. I can see those apples and I can smell those apples he brought us at school. Then there were so many wild crab apples in the area, they made delicious jelly so that was another special treat. So while things were really tough it was amazing how much food we could gather and garnish from surrounding berries and the wild things.

In order for a teacher to come to Cape Scott there had to be nine children or there would be no school. That was the stipulation. So, one year we just about didn't have a school because we didn't have the nine, but fortunately for us, a large family of many children arrived just in time and that saved the day and saved the school. Their name was the Paynes. Mr. and Mrs. Payne and their children. Then after Mr. Pullinger went, we were lucky enough to get a Miss [M.] Morris. It was not easy to keep teachers up there, especially if they came from cities like Victoria or Vancouver, because life was really very hard and rugged at the Cape. Well, finally Miss Morris came, she was a tiny little lady with a good sense of humour and we just loved her. She was so different. And very quaint.

My little sister Miriam was five when she started, that was to make up the nine that year. The schoolroom was a part of the hall, or the meeting place, and in this one room, was the usual pot-bellied stove and lots and lots of wood. There were also the long tables that the kids used to sleep on during the all-night dances, and there were some desks. I can really vividly remember the day that Miriam left

the room and was missing for a long time. Miss Morris really became worried. So I ran home to tell my mother, and at that time we lived near the school in Mr. Bekker's house. My mother was in a state of shock when she found out that Miriam was missing because she really believed that little Miriam had fallen down the deep-holed biffy, which was just outside the school. Finally, I heard a little squeak from behind the cupboard and there she was!

One of the things I remember too, when we moved further away from school and had to walk the three miles each way, we had to take our lunch naturally, and the only thing that we had for sandwiches for a long, long time, which I couldn't look in the face for years, was Roger's syrup sandwiches. The Danish children who lived further away from school, their sandwiches mostly were lard and salt and pepper. So we begged our mother to make us lard sandwiches with salt and pepper. It was a real pleasant change from the soggy sandwiches.

Canon M. Boulton was instrumental in getting a church started. He was a theological student of the Anglican Church and he went to Cape Scott in the summers of 1912, 1913 and 1914. He would come up and maybe hold services in houses. Occasionally a mission boat would come to Fisherman Bay and my family would go down and a service would be held. My uncle Tom, who was there a year or so before us, he was a carpenter and he got the church built. He built the church with the help of many of the Danish men and also, including my father, John Christmas Williams. Now, this church [Christ Church, Cape Scott] was completed in 1914. Bishop [John Charles] Roper came up to Cape Scott [14 September 1913] to dedicate the church.

The Anglican Synod gave one missionary, a Methodist, the privilege, or they consented to let him use the Anglican Church whenever he wanted to for service.

My mother also taught Sunday School there and she taught all of us, including a lot of the little Danish kids that came too.

My Auntie Mary was married in the church on November 3, 1913. Rev. Webber was the minister.

The settlement of the district is retarded to a large extent, by the physical characteristics of the country itself. The north end of the island from Cape Commerell to Cape Scott is very regular, there being no stream of any size and no inlets. As this coast is exposed to the rigours of the open Pacific, the absence of any shelter for boats is a serious obstacle. In winter, when northerly gales are frequent, it is often impossible for boats to make a landing for days at a time. Six miles east of Cape Scott is a small bay, Fisherman Bay, where it is said fishing-boats may weather the gales at anchor, but it is at times impossible, even here, to make a landing, as the bay is exposed to the open sea.

—L. S. Cokely to G. H. Dawson, *Sessional Papers*, 1916

Ellen Mellstrom: We liked the sea and we hated the sea because sometimes it could be pretty cruel. My brothers drowned in 1939.

Clara Hersley: They were taking mink and 'coon out to the Scott Islands. It wasn't too bad when they left but it came up quite suddenly. There may have been a tide rip out in Scott Channel, too, because Scott Channel was quite bad for its rip. More than one person drowned out there.

For two or three weeks we patrolled the beach to see if they were coming ashore, but they never did. We used to patrol the beach nearly every day, hoping to find them, and hoping we wouldn't I guess. The only thing we found were a couple of cages and the doghouse from the top of the boat. That was all.

Clearly, the natural dangers of a wild and isolated region had to be faced, and were accepted by the settlers who remained. It was the basic economic problem of making a living that defeated all but a handful of them by the 1920s. The few that remained there into the 1930s and '40s may not have been the rugged outdoor types so often associated with frontier life, but they were resourceful, and apparently content, in their own quiet ways.

LESTER PETERSON: My grand-uncle was a sort of a basis for San Josef Valley. My grand-uncle found that there were persons who needed groceries who didn't have cash and what he decided to do was build a cannery and then take in berries and fruit and can them on shares in exchange, so he could bargain for what they had with what he had canned. He sent a great deal of canned goods to Rivers Inlet. There was a market among the fishermen at the canneries: Wadhams, Provincial, Beaver, and so on. So for many years the cannery was a successful operation on a small scale.

I asked him sometimes "Didn't you want to go out and see the world?" and it didn't seem to bother him. He had virtually never seen an automobile or a streetcar. It didn't concern him. He never in his life, from 1904 to 1944 when he died, was out farther than Port Alice, to the hospital; so he didn't get to see Nanaimo or Vancouver or Victoria or any other part of the world. It didn't seem to concern him.

I think the term "pioneer" is a misnomer in a sense of a person being somebody who is dauntless and wants to tackle the wilds. There were some very shy people, timid people, who somehow or other in their standards or in their priorities, being alone or being in a place where they could be free, counted more than their fear of the wilds.

One fellow I knew, Bernt Ronning, whose home was a centre for what little community life there was for so many years, could hardly see past his nose, even with his glasses. But he wandered down to the mouth of the Macjack River and trapped miles and miles of coastline, and never even thought of such things as cougars. He couldn't see them if they were there.

I think the people who came out were quite well educated. They weren't peasants. They were very frequently trades-people. Many of them had mastered the English language and they formed cooperatives both in Sointula and Cape Scott. They built their halls, their schools, their churches on a cooperative basis. I don't think there was a church at Sointula, mind you, but certainly at Cape Scott.

I think when the people came there was a great seriousness. They felt that if they did work hard, if they did cooperate, if they did put the effort in, something would be achieved. Unfortunately, there were so many forces against it, such as the war, the spiral of prices, and then followed by the Depression. But for a place like Cape Scott that didn't matter. You could only be so far from some kind of transportation to survive, really.

There was a plan, and a promise to build a road. Early in the century, after the founding of Holberg especially, a road was worked to the point it could be driven on for about seven miles, and I really believe that if there hadn't been a war in 1914 that that road would have been continued and joined with the road at Fisherman Bay.

The surveyor's report each year dutifully noted the value of the land, the productivity and the desirability of this area. It's kind of an irony that it didn't have the attention that the other parts of the country got where there were far fewer settlers and far more road than Cape Scott. For instance, the lower Sunshine Coast, by the time of the war had probably 40 miles of road, even though it had steamer

Theo and Johanne Frederiksen with cougar.

stops that almost everybody used. And Cape Scott, that was entirely dependent on the possibility of one road, didn't get it.

ELLEN MELLSTROM: My parents talked about the road the government had promised and never brought in because they wanted a way to sell their products. But later we canned a lot of things and sold them to Port Alice. We shipped them out with the boat that brought the freight in. We canned butter and cream and meat, and we made a meatball soup and we canned that and people seemed to buy that a lot, too. If there had been a road I guess everyone would have done a lot better because they could have shipped out their dairy products and things like that.

CLARA HERSLEY: I guess there were problems, but my parents seemed to cope with them.

PHYLLIS HILL: Cape Scott was something very special and clean and though we had so little, we had so much.

CLARA HERSLEY: I don't think my father would have left except for the fact that he had to get out. He didn't want to leave. The Air Force thought they wanted the Cape, but afterwards they didn't really anyway. They began to build the [radar] tower right above our place, a little way towards the point of the island. In 1942, they took us out on the scow that brought the stuff in for the Air Force.

ELLEN MELLSTROM: We went back about four or five years ago—my youngest sister and myself, my two sons and her two daughters—and we walked in and saw the whole place. But everything—all the houses and things—had fallen down and were so covered with moss and rock that we could hardly find anything. The bush had grown up so everything had changed. The only thing that was the same was the beach and the landscape out over the water.

SOINTULA

After the collapse of the colony in 1905, slightly more than 100 people remained at Sointula. They now had their own parcels of land, for which they paid $1 an acre, some basic foodstuffs such as flour and meat that were evenly distributed from the colony's stock of food, and very little else. At least there were no more debts to be paid off; they were making a fresh start, and they had their own resourcefulness.

Apart from farming there was not much work to be done at Sointula itself. To make a living, many of the men, like those at Cape Scott, had to work away from Malcolm Island in the basic industries of the British Columbia coast: logging and fishing.

ARVO TYNJALA: One of the difficulties was language. Because many of these people had come directly from Finland and they had to go looking for jobs and it was difficult for them to make themselves understood. But they got over that. Two or three of them went in a boat and there was always one that spoke a few words of English. They would send this one man to ask if there were any jobs at a logging camp.

We used to go from Sointula with rowboats all the way down to Seymour Narrows on this side and into the different inlets and islands, sometimes hundreds of miles looking for jobs.

They were hard years and there weren't too many jobs open. In many cases they would prefer the men that came from town, because they had no boat to row away in if they got into trouble. We were kind of independent you know.

The conditions in those days were awful as far as living quarters go. The loggers carried their own blankets and bedclothes, and there was nothing in the bunkhouses but the mattresses and the bedbugs. There were plenty of them!

There was no place to wash, or to wash your clothes. In the bunkhouses they used to have a big drum for a stove. In the first bunkhouse I was in there were 24 men. You can just imagine when they all came in after working in the rain all day, all the clothes wet, hanging on the ropes and timbers, and a good fire in the stove—you can just imagine the stink that came out of those dirty clothes.

We usually arranged it so we could get a little time off, depending on where we were, to go home once in a while, to get the dirt off our backs in the saunas.

ALFRED WILLIAMS: The oldtimers here were much in demand by the logging companies. They were proud of how much work they could accomplish in one day. They never sloughed, you know. Like now, a lot of times the most important thing is how much money you make, not how much work you do. In the olden days they were proud of how much work they could do.

Opposite: Bella Coola fisherman hauling in salmon gillnet. This type of boat was common from Puget Sound to Bristol Bay, Alaska. (Clifford R. Kopas photo).

ARVO TYNIALA: The early fishing was done here on the Nimpkish River just over from Alert Bay. Some of the Indians were drag-seining there and B.C. Packers had a little plant there. They would drag-seine right in the river; nobody thought of fishing outside the river. There was no limit, so wherever the fish were, they went and towed their drag-seine around and pulled them in.

Even over at Cluxewe [River] there, you had to select a spot. There were so many fish right next to the river—just a black cloud of them strung all along the beach and you had to be careful where you threw your seine. You just wouldn't be able to handle it if you threw it in where there was a lot of fish.

DICK MICHELSON: When the colony started to go my father decided to leave too. He had work in Cumberland in the coal mine.

We came back in about 1909. The Suquash coal mine started up and he wanted to bring the family here to settle down. It seemed that the people were quite happy and contented. Most of the families had their own houses. They had milk and made butter and they used to go to logging camps and up to Rivers Inlet for the fishing.

I went to work in Suquash, in the mine there. I worked for about a year, I guess, but I never did like it—too closed up. Another miner there wanted to go up to Rivers Inlet for the fishing, and I had a 16-foot rowboat, so the two of us decided to go. And we went up there in that 16-foot rowboat.

Located on the central British Columbia coast about 200 miles north of Vancouver, Rivers Inlet was—and still is—one of the major salmon fishing areas on the coast. It was particularly important around the turn of the century because of its large runs of sockeye salmon, which was the only type of salmon to be canned in those years. It was important to the fishermen of Sointula, Bella Coola and Cape Scott because it was relatively close to each of those places, and the summer fishing season represented a regular source of income each year.

OLE ANDERSON: Just about everybody was into that. They went and fished that sockeye season in Rivers Inlet, which started around the 24th of June and lasted until about the 6th of August; that was a six-week trip to Rivers Inlet. That was classed as your fishing season.

ARVO TYNIALA: I'd have been 14 years old when I hired myself out as a boat puller. I took the job for the season for $10. In the earlier years, before we went there, it had been mainly Indians, a few Japanese, and then the white people started going in more and more after the First World War. I don't know how it was earlier, but by the time I went there they had an agreement on the number of boats each of the canneries were limited to. I think the whole inlet was limited to 700 boats. When it was opened to gas boats from about 1923 on, well, I haven't got anything official on it, but there were close to 2,000 boats fishing in Rivers Inlet at one time. Of course they're not in the inlet alone, you know, they come right out to the open sound.

OLE ANDERSON: It was all company-owned gear. You went up to the cannery. You got this skiff; most of the time it was sunk, tied to the float. You went up to the office, got the number of your skiff. You went and looked up your skiff number—marked right on the bow deck, say number 30 skiff. Well, that was yours. You'd bail it out, and after you got it bailed out, then you went up to the net loft and presented this number 30 to the net boss, and he'd show you the locker, where all the floorboards and all the hatch covers and everything pertaining to that skiff were all stashed up there. You went and packed those down, fitted them into place, put your tent up; and there you are: you are ready to go. The rent for the season was $10 for that boat.

Wadham's Cannery, Rivers Inlet. (L. B. Christensen photo).

ARVO TYNJALA: In the old days with the skiff you only had that little tent there and when it came to rainy season, all the blankets and everything were damp, unless they were really wet. When you had to start sailing, you had to take the tent off, so your bed—the floors and everything were soaked. The bed-clothes you could always put under the bowdeck. So we used to put wood alcohol on the floor, light it, and let it burn long enough to dry the water off the boards we had to make our bed on.

DICKIE MICHELSON: I used to go out fishing with my dad probably from, oh, I don't know, maybe six years old until I was about fourteen.

My dad when he first went up, I guess they used to row up there. They used to row up with their own boat—just a rowing type of double-ender with two sets of oars, the two of them. Then they'd rent the skiffs up there to fish with, but that was before my time. They used to talk about rowing and sailing; it took them about three days, I guess, to get up to Rivers Inlet. It's only about 70 miles or something, anyway.

He was quite a keen fisherman, one of the best in Rivers Inlet area. There's a thousand to fifteen hundred boats there and he was always, oh, maybe second or third or fourth high production. They used to have quite a competition in those days—a high list nailed on every cannery wall and then the overall high for Rivers Inlet and he was always up there. He could read the tide book better than I ever learnt how to read it.

He fished off of this tidal narrows called Skookumchuck where the tide is really, really strong. You couldn't really relax too much at all; you never just lumped your net out and went to sleep because you would end up inside this tidal lagoon all wrapped around a bunch of rocks and trees. So it was a really hard

working place. It's probably one of the hardest working places to fish on the coast. So quite a bit of the time he'd have a cat nap and I'd be watching the net and he'd tell me to wake him up when we drifted a short ways or whatever. It was quite interesting, quite exciting.

ALFRED WILLIAMS: The first time I went out with my dad, they were still pulling by hand. They had a set of rollers and that was my job, when there was a little bit of wind, I would push on the oars to make it easier for him to pull the boat backwards. It had a little engine in it and I remember that quite well. I think I must have been about eight or nine years old.

Each of my brothers, when they reached a certain age would go with our grandfather. First they would be with my dad and then—there was so many of us you know—one of us always went with grandfather, Mr. Riksman, from my mother's side of the family.

DICKIE MICHELSON: We fished for Provincial cannery in the old days. It didn't can anymore, but Beaver did, and it was only a mile or two away and there was quite a few of the women folk used to work in the cannery, so a lot of the boats used to end up at the Beaver.

There were dances and there was a float with a bootlegger down the coast a way. Sometimes the old folks would disappear there for awhile and leave us kids paddling around the rowboats or fishing, getting into mischief really, I think.

Oh, there were always some locals with some kind of accordians and stuff. But one dance, a couple of guys were dancing too lively and they fell off the dock and damn near drowned. So the manager closed the dances down then. But this was later, when I was fishing on my own.

You couldn't get a fishing licence till you were 16 years old at that time; probably it's still the same. So when I was 16 I rented a gillnet boat and went fishing up in Rivers Inlet and the central coast and then went back to school in the fall.

I rented a gillnet boat from Canadian Fishing Company. I think we pumped more water through that boat than you'll ever know. In fact I got too tired of pumping so I hired a deckhand to help me pump it. We could never sleep the night or the boat would sink; so one of us would have to get up and pump water.

There were several of us had our boats and somebody figured he had a hot spot that could beat the old man's place so we'd go there and try it but we never did really. Most of us moved away from where our dads fished—the more independent ones did anyway.

The Rivers Inlet sockeye season represented a fairly reliable source of income to the fishermen, but the amount of that income varied from year to year. Everything was dependent on the number of fish in each run, the skill and luck of the fishermen, and the price paid by the canneries for each fish caught. This last factor was a major concern of all fishermen, and several attempts were made to form a union which would negotiate the price of fish with the canning companies.

ARVO TYNJALA: The organization of fishermen was very slow from the beginning. The first time they struck in Rivers Inlet was in 1917 when pretty well everything was going up in price but the offered price for fish was 15 cents apiece. The fishermen decided not to go out to fish unless they were paid 25 cents. The companies tried all the tricks they had to break the ranks, to get one group against the other, but the strike was settled by negotiating between the fishermen and the canners and they raised the price to 22 cents, or 22½ cents, I think.

Fishing is a bit different from logging or any other industrial work. When you've got your own boat and your own net, you're pretty independent. And the different categories of fishermen is a very important angle. One group can be used against another.

LESTER PETERSON: This was a good example I think of the Finnish influence. It was a matter of how low could we endure the price of fish. And it was quite obvious that within the next year or so it would be down to something like 25 cents. We had had 45, and then 40 cents, and then it was going to be 35. And with all due regard to the Depression we felt that it was not enough. And so the thing was to make a solid show. Never previously had there been a completely solid front of the fisherman.

We watched the fish go by. It was as if there was a storm blowing, there were so many fish jumping in Schooner Pass. The Japanese fishermen ceased fishing, the Indian fishermen, although they had great discussions with the Indian Agents, they stopped fishing. Our own personal cannery manager was quite favourable towards us; he realized the direness of the situation. The next year the fish were bought by the pound and on the average it probably was around 45 to 47 cents a fish so we did go up a little bit after that. But the leaders in the strike, who held us together, were Sointula fishermen.

ALFRED WILLIAMS: Lauri Jarvis was a troller and a gillnetter. He gillnetted first and then he trolled. He's the one that invented the gillnet drum. It made fishing a lot faster. You could set your net in places where you wouldn't normally set. You could set right against reefs, in more or less dangerous places, because you could pull up your net so much faster. We could fish in dirtier weather because you could pull it up in bigger swells and stronger winds. It made quite a difference.

And Ted Davidson here, he was the first one to use that system on a seine boat.

Ray Peterson with gillnet, Rough Bay.

Of course, many other fishermen from all over the British Columbia coast played important roles in organization of a fishermen's union. Since fishing and processing technology and techniques are continually improving, a firm belief in the value of collective action combined with the application of individual skills was an important feature of Sointula life for many years. Another aspect was the high level of interest and activity many members of the community maintained in community affairs.

WAYNE HOMER: Matt Halminen took everything very seriously; he hardly ever indulged in a joke, and he took a very brisk interest in the community's affairs and even the future of the community. He mentions that in the book,* there. After the commune was dissolved, he didn't see any reason to slacken his interest in serving the people of the community. He raised a big family of his own and took part in most of the public affairs—meetings—and a very generous share in the forming of the cooperative store here in 1909, a store which is still in existence. Halminen was a member of the board of directors of both the commune and afterwards the cooperative store.

He was a farmer, a farmer once and for all. He cleared about eight acres of farm land out of the green timber with his own bare hands. He had a beautiful orchard; he had cows and sold milk and butter with all the other people, he indulged in that because it was a good business.

Austin Makela guided not only the commune, but after the commune, he was our legal advisor till his death. He never left the island, he stayed. He was justice of the peace, and when people needed legal advice, he took care of all those things. In the social field, he was advisor; he always attended community meetings and guided them to stay on an even keel.

GLORIA WILLIAMS: Well, Mrs. Riksman, she was interested in the community affairs; she was involved in everything and for years she ran the library. At any do the Finnish Organization put on, Mrs. Riksman was there, rain or shine, selling the door tickets. She used to write, almost weekly, to the Finnish newspapers that came from Toronto, I believe. She always had articles in there; she wrote very well.

I can remember as a little girl always hearing of Mrs. Riksman—this lady who lived in Sointula who was called "Iso aiti." That means "great mother" or something. My family isn't from Sointula, but we heard about her all the time and it was a big thing when "Iso aiti" came to Vancouver to see a play or something.

OLE ANDERSON: My dad came here the first time in 1906, but he didn't stay very long. He was a sailor, so he went back to deep-seaing. The second time he came here to stay was when he bought the colony house sometime in 1911.

He was one of those fellows that was never still. You'd never see him sitting idle, doing nothing. If he wasn't reading, he was writing. Where he started writing poetry is something I don't know.

I remember quite often, when we put up some shows and programs at the Hall, they'd come to dad and say, "Look, John, would you make a comic song for next Saturday," or whatever the case might have been, or "Two weeks from now there's some program," they'd say, "You've got to write a poem about such and such a thing." And he'd write it! I remember in the shops lots of times he'd get a verse in his head and all of a sudden he'd go and write it on a piece of plywood or something, or on the back of a piece of sandpaper. Came five o'clock, we'd be

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* See footnote on page 31.

hunting for those things. That happened quite often. This was a community where the people just had to make their own fun. We had no car to run around the streets with. There was no streets. So we just had to make our own fun. I don't think there was a night in the week that there wasn't something doing at that hall. There was athletic practice or song practice or show rehearsals; you name it. There was a show there just about every Saturday.

They were mostly Finnish plays, pertaining to the Finnish Organization and the labour movement and so on. A lot of them drifted back to scenes of old Finland: what life was like in Finland when they left their home and so on.

The Finnish Organization was a cultural organization. It was not just here in Sointula, it was across the country. The idea of the Finnish Organization was that they'd arrange these Finnish plays, and we'd have a Finnish play here, maybe a couple of times a month.

There was a fellow by the name of Toivo Aro used to be lightkeeper at Pulteney Point for years. He was quite an artist. There was another one here by the name of [Kaarlo] Kaislo. They did a lot of that scenery for the stage. It was all voluntary work. Costumes, well, they were made up by people, and then a lot of them were donated by the local people. There were quite a few handy women around here in them days as tailors. The Hilton brothers were here as tailors. Well, if you want to know what Tsar Nikolai's uniform looked like, they knew what it looked like, so they turned around and made it, if they needed that on stage.

WAYNE HOMER: Humour was the top attraction in the plays mostly because they were usually short—three acts—lasting a couple of hours altogether. But then, two or three times a year we had a special occasion like the first of May celebrations and New Year's Eve and any other excuse they might think of. They put up a real show; it sometimes contained as many as 50 people, and a five-act play would last anywhere from 8 to 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock.

ALFRED WILLIAMS: One of the biggest plays they put on was written by Ole Anderson's dad, John Anderson. It was about the life on a sailing ship that came to the port and then the girlfriends would come. It was a musical.

WAYNE HOMER: We had prominent comedians. They were usually elder people. Hans Myntti's father, Felix Myntti, he was pretty good. He was always given the tough parts for the comedian. He did well at that.

Then when it came to gendarmes or policemen or anything like that, we had lots of them in the plays too. They selected men who were athletic, straight and tall, and gruff-voiced and all that sort of thing. And then, for the meek, they selected people who were normally and naturally meek in their daily life; and they were given the parts where they were hen-pecked all to pieces by their wives. And, everybody did well.

Everybody had to take a part in the show; they couldn't say no. The committee in charge of the play, they decided who they were going to shanghai for the parts and that was it. If the person was unable to carry out the role then it was his or her problem to find a stand-in. That was the rule. And they accepted it. People knew each other and the director and the group that were around them organizing this thing, they knew what was required for these parts and they knew who might be the best actor for that part.

IRENE MICHELSON: I remember I was once on the stage with Dick. He had to be surprised about something and he sat in the rocking chair and the rocking chair broke on stage and he fell down. I remember the foolish look on his face. I forgot

Band at Sointula in 1903. The "Band-Master" sitting in the foreground is Voitt Peippo.

what he said, but nobody knew it was a surprise to him; they thought it was intended to be, and I just had to turn around so I wouldn't start laughing there.

WAYNE HOMER: We used to go to the hall at least three nights a week, sometimes four and five nights a week, to practice, to get everything down perfect.

Usually our plays were perforated with songs. And the orchestra had to be trained to play those songs and accompany the singers very quietly without disturbing the voices, so it took a heck of a lot of practice.

There were good singing voices. The Anderson boys, Ted and Ole. They sang very well and took their parts very well. And of the ladies, they're dead and gone. Well, they had been singing on stage in Finland in the working class theatres over there.

Then during the plays the hall was usually packed—standing room only—and they were standing in the aisles.

It attracted a lot of people from the outside. They didn't understand the words but they understood the action and they really understood the dancing. They begged that we translate some of the shows into English so we had them typed out in English.

Immediately after the play, the band started playing dance music, or somebody with an accordian sat down and everybody went on the floor. They danced until dawn. In the wintertime, they didn't dance that long, but in the summertime they danced until three o'clock in the morning, until daylight.

OLE ANDERSON: We had all kinds of activities that were arranged by the Finnish Organization. We had socials, song rehearsals, athletics, and it was all kind of organized by the grown-ups. Even the youngsters' programs were from the Finnish Organization.

We had this, what we called the children's club. Faithfully, every Sunday morning before ten, old man [Theodore] Tanner would walk from around the bay—he lived right across the bay—up to the hall to do his part for instructing these young kids. I was one of them. We were eight, ten, I guess—something like that.

Just imagine the ambition people must have had to try to pull together and get a program going.

May Day was the biggest celebration Sointula had. Everything was closed on May Day. It was the Labour Day here. That was the big celebration. Most of the women even got a new dress for that day. If they didn't get one any other time of the year they had a new one on May Day.

It was the same as a sports day is today. You'd have different outdoor races, but you also had the indoor programs of recitations and songs and different things. Each one had a prize for the kids, the same as the outdoors sports did. Even the older people took part in these sports. There were different races for the ladies, like you have today.

GLORIA WILLIAMS: I remember the tree where they used to have that speaker's platform, it was what you called a "schoolmarm".

ALFRED WILLIAMS: They called it the "schoolmarm" tree. It was split like a "Y"; in the middle, in the crotch, they had the platform with a little fence around it. Whoever wanted to hold a speech, well he would get up on there and the people used to sit on the grass in a circle and listen to the guy. The political speeches lasted forever.

GLORIA WILLIAMS: I remember this man speaking for a long, long, long time and it really didn't sink in.

OLE ANDERSON: Politics was a big thing in the community in the early days. We were members of the Finnish Organization, and the Finnish Organization was definitely connected up with the labour movement. Say there was a strike of the miners back east; well they would come through the Finnish Organization. You had to take up a collection or you could even put up a show or something and the proceeds would go towards the aid of the strike. Everything was pertaining to the labour movement.

When the BC loggers had their strikes during the Hungry Thirties, I remember going around here with a Model T Ford collecting a sack of potatoes from this house, and another sack of vegetables from another house, and making donations to the striking loggers. That was quite common.

Another reflection of community values in the early years was the Co-op Store. There are varying claims about its exact place and status in the history of cooperative ventures in Canada, but it is believed to be the oldest consumer cooperative in continuous operation in Canada.

WAYNE HOMER: Up to 1909, Peter Hilton kept a private store in his own livingroom. But his stock was very small; it didn't go very far. He didn't have money to begin with. So, the community got together and decided they should buy Hilton out and move his store into a larger building and establish the Co-op Store. This was set up in 1909.

They managed to keep the prices way down, way below other private stores because they bought in quantity. Then it was agreed by the membership that the store should not charge more than five percent markup over the landed cost here. Well, that kept the price way, way down.

It was the marketing which really built up the store. There were numerous people with small farms and they had enough land cleared so they could support three or four cows and a couple hundred chickens. So, for every family there was a surplus of milk and certainly a surplus of eggs.

This guy in Prince Rupert, he came here to buy furs and he discovered that there's something else to be bought here: the farm produce. So he made a contract with the store that he'd take everything they had to give and he sent it to the various villages, mines and logging camps and fish canneries around Prince Rupert. They started sending cases of eggs; they had 30 dozen in each case. There was a hell of a bunch of eggs that went up north, twice a week. They made butter and they put it in pound packages and sent butter up there. It sold very well. Course it only takes two days to get there and they took care they churned the butter just before the boat came so that it was fresh.

In the springtime when they had a lot of young chickens hatched, they just wanted to keep the hens and all the young roosters were packed together in crates and shipped alive to Prince Rupert—they got rid of them.

There became a surplus of cows for some families. They would have butchered them but this guy got word they had live cows for sale so he said to send them up. He sold them to the ranchers up the Skeena River. They paid $90 apiece for a milk cow. In those days, $90 was like $900 today.

SALLY PETERSON: They used to have a yearly meeting; that was a big day. They used to call it the "eating-meeting" because it was an all-day affair, and the women would prepare the food up at the hall and they would have lunch there and coffee in the afternoon.

The meeting would start in the morning and they would carry on; sometimes they would carry on till evening. The schoolchildren, we'd go up there for lunch from the school.

ALFRED WILLIAMS: Practically everybody went there. It was quite interesting and there was a lot of arguments too—heated discussions—but there always is in a community like this. People were not afraid to get up and say what they thought. They would come right up and say what they thought instead of talking behind somebody's back afterwards.

As mentioned in the very early history of the colony, a sauna was one of the first buildings constructed on Malcolm Island. An efficient and relaxing way of getting clean, the sauna was a regular part of life in Sointula. It was also used for healing tuberculosis.

WAYNE HOMER: My father used to say that they advocated TB patients should find a residence within a pine grove, but what they didn't know is that you've got to bring the pine into your steam bath to get any benefits from it.

I've been cured of TB twice myself and my sister, Selinda was cured of TB. It's a pine leaf fomentation carried on in a moderately heated sauna. Pads, just like sleeping bags, are filled with pine needles instead of wool, and they're thoroughly soaked with boiling hot water so that the needles just wait there and they steam quite a bit for a long, long time. As soon as it is cooled enough so the operator can put his hand in between the pads without burning, then the patient is rolled in there and covered up right to the neck, and kept there and of course, looked after.

You sweat terribly; your eyes fill with sweat. Someone has to be around to wipe the sweat off your face, and you get very, very thirsty so you have to be given lukewarm water or fruit juice; preferably fruit juice squeezed from fresh fruit. It increases the sweating, that's what it does. Usually, the healthiest person—even the strongest—cannot take that treatment over 15 minutes; 12 to 15 minutes is just about the maximum. You just beg to be let out of there after that.

The attendant will take your wet wrappings off and wrap you in a woollen blanket and socks and moccasins and carry you into the house and into bed, with the blanket wrapped around you and more blankets.

The sweating in my case took about two hours after I got into bed before it started to ease off. I was treated twice, with one day of rest after the first treatment, then on the third day I was given another bath. And when I stopped sweating after that second bath, the old man looked at me and he said, "Well, you can get up now and start working."

My father was uneducated, but he was observant. He watched what other people were doing and what he thought they were doing wrong and what they were doing right and he memorized all that. He had a library of things in his brain that he could pick on when he needed something—a very keen memory.

Today, the people of Sointula are aware of the struggles of the past, but they have done well for themselves over the years, and their memories are largely happy ones.

IRENE MICHELSON: I remember so many of them talking. Like my aunt and another old lady, Mrs. Pakkala, they used to talk about the times when they first came here and how much fun they had even though they all had children and they all had to work. She said they were all so happy. We just laughed at the different things that they said. It wasn't all gloom in those days. When they were young and healthy well, they had ambitions to make everything turn good.

ALFRED WILLIAMS: They were individuals; they stuck to their principles, which is a good thing, you know. That's what makes it interesting.

OLE ANDERSON: There was no church, no policemen, no beer parlour and no trouble in them days.

The vision of Matti Kurikka may have faded away, but the legacy of the original colonists and the determination and persistence of those who remained is evident today. For the Finns of Malcolm Island, Sointula still means "harmony."

Iver Fougner, pioneer teacher and first secretary of the colony at Bella Coola, relaxing at home.
(Iver Fougner photo; PABC 95348).

"NO PARADISE, NO UTOPIA"

Nov. 16, '94 Bella Coola

What fools we mortals be. Indeed I am a mortal. We left Crookston Wednesday Oct. 17, 94, for Bella Coola, B.C.

Came to Victoria Saturday 20 Oct., stayed there a week, saw Bella Coola Oct. 30 in the afternoon. General disappointment.

Landed on the Indian reserve where we are yet, expecting to go up the river every day.

I feel like leaving the valley, but as I have no place to go I may as well stay here a while yet.

Today the snow is visiting us; yesterday the thermometer was below freezing with clear sky.

When warm we have rain, when cold, snow. This beats all. I pity the women and children amongst us.

Look before you leap.

—IVAR FOUGNER

ARVO TYNIALA: Most communities, whatever they are—little towns or villages—they're usually formed around some kind of industrial development, either a logging camp or a pulpmill or a sawmill or something. But in Sointula it was a different thing. The people went there first, and then started wondering what they were going to build. They went on their own, and then started building the community, and that's really the difference. It took some courage, you know, to go into the wilderness and start building a community without any help.

It did take courage and determination to go to Bella Coola, Cape Scott and Sointula at the turn of the century. That the actual colonies did not last long is less important than the fact that people stayed on the land long after their original idealism had faded into the wilderness around them.

The utopian idealism at Sointula was not a monolithic faith; it reflected the varied outlooks of independent-minded individuals, and without the firm and practical basis of a united group it could not last. The cooperative spirit of the Cape Scott colonists simply could not overcome the natural limitations of that wild isolated location. The initial Bella Coola colony did last much longer than Cape Scott, but the obvious success of the remaining settlers helped to attract others to the valley. Perhaps the early death of the Reverend Saugstad loosened the bonds of faith and morality that held the colonists together, but when the last colony meeting was held at Hagensborg in 1909, the colonists could not, and did not want to, isolate themselves from the wider community around them.

Inevitably, the younger generations of settlers faced different conditions and had different values, and many left the communities as a result. However, there are still descendants of the original colonists at Bella Coola and Sointula today.

The church still stands at Hagensborg, though used by fewer people now. On the hill at Sointula the F.O. Hall is used for weddings and dances now and then, and fishermen and fishboats crowd the floats behind the Rough Bay breakwater. Under the thick cover of salal and overgrowth, a few broken-down buildings remain at Cape Scott, reminders of the people who settled there nearly 90 years ago, beside the ruffled lagoon and the lovely, lonely beaches.

SOURCES

ORAL SOURCES

The following interviews were used in the preparation of this issue of the SOUND HERITAGE SERIES:

	Interviewed by
Petra Amsden	G. Fish, March 1982.
Ole Anderson	G. Fish, August 1979, February 1982.
Annie Engebretson	Imbert Orchard.
Milo Fougner	Imbert Orchard.
Ruth Gurr	G. Fish, March 1982.
Edel Hammer	Imbert Orchard.
Niels and Nancy Hansen	G. Fish, March 1982.
Johanna and John Harestad	G. Fish, March 1982.
Clara Hersley	G. Fish, February 1982.
Phyllis Hill	Charles Lillard, July 1982.
Wayne Homer	G. Fish, February, March 1982.
Annie Levelton	Imbert Orchard.
Ted Levelton	Imbert Orchard.
Ellen Mellstrom	G. Fish, February 1982.
Irene Michelson	G. Fish, February 1982.
Richard Michelson, Sr.	W. J. Langlois, May 1972.
Richard Michelson	G. Fish, February 1982.
Bertha Nygaard	G. Fish, March 1982.
Vilho Oksanen	G. Fish, February 1982.
Sally and Charles Petersen	G. Fish, February 1982.
Eva Peterson	Imbert Orchard.
Lester Peterson	G. Fish, March 1982.
Alex Pouttu	G. Fish, February 1982.
Kaisa Riksman (translated by Ethel Cadorin)	Imbert Orchard.
Janet and Ted Tanner	G. Fish, February 1982.
Arvo Tynjala	Imbert Orchard, June 1967; M. Kennedy, May 1972.
Urho Tynjala	M. Kennedy, May 1972.
Alfred and Gloria Williams	G. Fish, August 1979, February 1982.
Aino Halminen, Richard Michelson, Sr., Kaisa Riksman, and Arvo Tynjala	Martin Robin, 1968–69 for the CBC Radio program "Between Ourselves".

Tapes of the interviews are held by the Sound and Moving Image Division, Provincial Archives of British Columbia.

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Ellen Mellstrom: pp. i, 29, 53, 60, 65 and inside back cover.
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Gordon Fish

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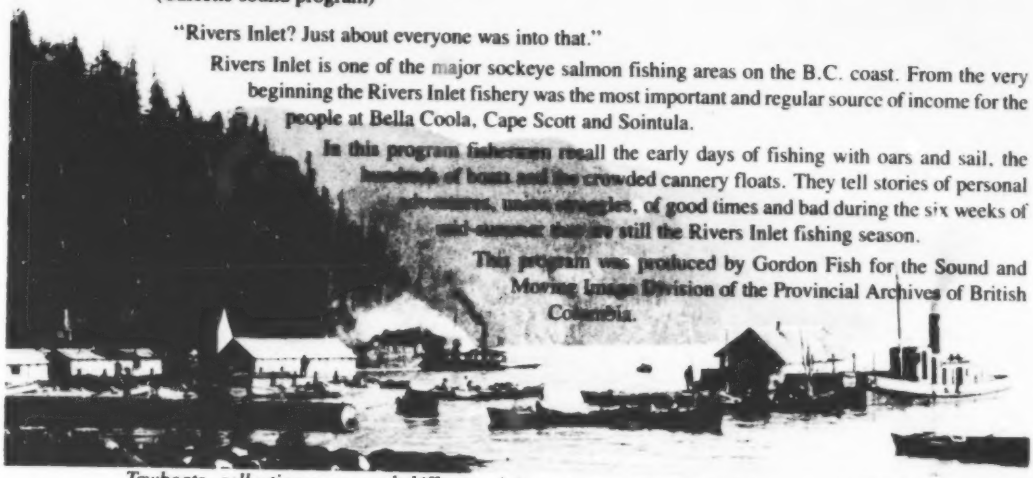

"Rivers Inlet? Just about everyone was into that."

Rivers Inlet is one of the major sockeye salmon fishing areas on the B.C. coast. From the very beginning the Rivers Inlet fishery was the most important and regular source of income for the people at Bella Coola, Cape Scott and Sointula.

In this program fishermen recall the early days of fishing with oars and sail, the hundreds of boats and the crowded cannery floats. They tell stories of personal adventures, union struggles, of good times and bad during the six weeks of mid-summer that are still the Rivers Inlet fishing season.

This program was produced by Gordon Fish for the Sound and Moving Image Division of the Provincial Archives of British Columbia.

Towboats, collection scows and skiffs crowd the water near Wadham's fish cannery in 1914. (C. B. Christensen photo; courtesy Lester R. Peterson).

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